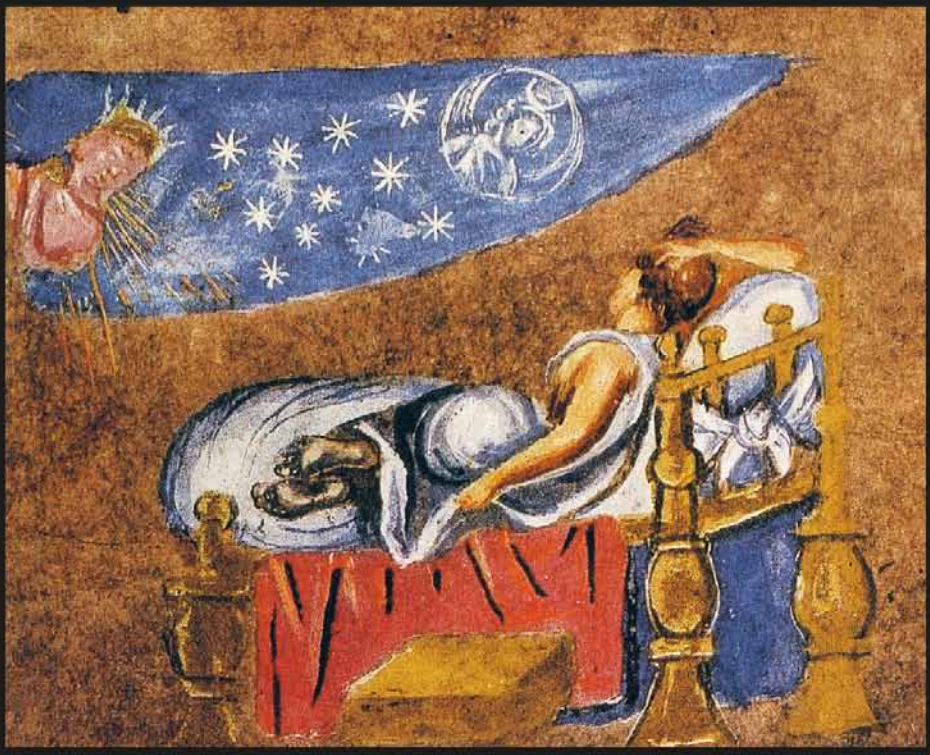
ASHGATE

Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond



EDITED BY
CHRISTINE ANGELIDI AND GEORGE T. CALOFONOS

DREAMING IN BYZANTIUM AND BEYOND

This page has been left blank intentionally

Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond

CHRISTINE ANGELIDI

And

GEORGE T. CALOFONOS

ASHGATE

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

Dreaming in Byzantium and beyond / edited by Christine Angelidi and George T. Calofonos.
pages cm
Includes index.
ISBN 978-1-4094-0055-4 (hardcover) – ISBN 978-1-4724-3305-3 (ebook) – ISBN 978-1-4724-3306-0 (epub) 1. Byzantine Empire–Historiography–Psychological aspects. 2. Dreams–Byzantine Empire. 3. Dream interpretation–Byzantine Empire. 4. Byzantine literature–History and criticism. 5. Christian literature, Byzantine–History and criticism. 6. Dreams in literature. 7. Christian hagiography. I. Angelide, Christina, author, editor of compilation. II. Calofonos, George T., author, editor of compilation.
DF505.D74 2014
949.5'02072–dc23

2013042219

ISBN 9781409400554 (hbk)
ISBN 9781472433053 (ebk – PDF)
ISBN 9781472433060 (ebk – ePUB)

Contents

Prologue

Whether 'the royal road to the unconscious' or not, dreams are a convenient – if still underexplored – path to a culture's imagination. In recent decades dreaming has emerged as a novel field of research, attracting the attention of scholars from many disciplines, including ancient, medieval and Islamic studies, and thus providing the context for interdisciplinary approaches. Byzantine studies, however, have been underrepresented in this trend.[1] In spite of the fact that significant research has been carried out, mainly but not exclusively in the field of oneirocriticism, other aspects of Byzantine dreaming have been explored in a sporadic way.

The present volume of collected studies marks a major turning point in the treatment of the subject. It sprang out of a colloquium which brought together for the first time scholars working on dreams in Late Antiquity and Byzantium from a variety of disciplines ranging from history and philology to anthropology and psychoanalysis. Entitled 'Dreams and Visions in Late Antiquity and Byzantium', the colloquium was organized by the Institute for Byzantine Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation (now the Department of Byzantine Research of the Institute of Historical Research – NHRF) and was held in Athens in May 2008.

The purpose of this volume is to explore essential areas of interrelated fields of research: terminology, imagery, dream theory and classification, dream interpretation, literary structure and the function of dream narratives. In fact, each of these themes deserves full treatment, which will only be possible once a critical mass of dream material available in Byzantine sources is compiled, evaluated and commented upon. Therefore, rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive study of the dreaming experience in Byzantium, this volume aims at opening up the discussion by presenting a series of focused contributions on key subjects connected to the themes mentioned above. At the same time, the contributions cover a wide range of primary sources, which include theoretical treatments of dreams, practical guides of dream interpretation and, of course, dream narratives.

[1] This is evident for example in the absence of Byzantium from all important interdisciplinary studies of dreaming, not only the pioneering *The Dream in Human Societies*, ed. G.E. von Grunebaum and R. Caillois (Berkeley, 1966), but also the more recent *Dream Cultures, Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. D. Shulman and G.G. Stroumsa (Oxford, 1999). A useful survey of the present state of research on Byzantine dreaming is offered by Margaret Mullett in her contribution in this volume.

Book chapters are organized thematically rather than chronologically. The volume opens with two studies on hagiographical dreaming, given that dreams were essential to the spiritual life of the saints and the faithful alike. Margaret Mullett undertakes a close reading of a middle Byzantine Saint's Life which features an impressive number of complex dream narratives; she contextualizes the latter, while offering a survey of the present state of research on Byzantine dreaming. Miracle collections, the main source for dream narratives, are explored by Stavroula Constantinou, who focuses on the structure and function of narratives particularly in the sub-genre of incubation miracle collections, which consist entirely of dreams.

Byzantium inherited from antiquity the ambiguous distinction between dreams, visions and ecstasy, which were often thought to belong to same mode of perception. In her detailed analysis of the intriguing terminology employed in early Christian literature to designate transcendental experiences, Bettina Krönung goes a long way towards clarifying an obscure picture. The narratives of journeys to the Other World undoubtedly refer to visions. Carolina Cupane concentrates on the descriptions of the heavenly city, conveyed in such narratives as a surprisingly urban imaginary landscape. She discusses the topography and the impressive transformation of the motif's function after its migration from hagiographical to secular literature. Though dream narratives are not common in Byzantine epistolography, a few instances of such dream reports represent rare examples of self-referential narrative. Christine Angelidi's commentary on a ninth-century 'autobiographical' letter shows that a personal dream of this kind bears strong affinities with the apocalyptic hagiographical visions of the time, except that it has been put to private use.

Dreams in Byzantine historiography have a pivotal function within the narrative framework, serving multiple purposes and strategies ranging from the personal, political and propagandistic, to the purely ideological. Ilias Anagnostakis embarks upon a close analysis of a notable dream report from Prokopios' heavily layered historical narrative of the *Wars* wherein the political is intrinsically interwoven with the personal. George T. Calofonos' contribution focuses on the narrative function of dreams in an emblematic text of the tenth century, the *Continuation of Theophanes*, and argues that the prolific use of dream narratives in this text attests to a revival of interest in prophetic dreaming after the Iconoclast period. Paul Magdalino offers a different view of dreams in the *Continuation of Theophanes*, using dream narratives from this work to illustrate a typology of dreaming for middle and late Byzantine historiography. In his impressive survey of historiographical dreams in this period, he discerns originality in only a few 'subversive' dream reports. Discussing the same dream material but partly from different perspectives, the contributions of the latter two scholars engage in a potentially fruitful dialogue on the typology of historical dreaming.

The corpus of dreambooks, or *oneirokritika*, is a well-defined and well-studied group of sources, which exemplifies the Byzantine way of perceiving and interpreting symbolic dreams. Furnishing a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the oneirocritical literature, Steven Oberhelman addresses the question of their dependence on the oneirocritic tradition of antiquity, and discusses the dreambooks' organization, internal logic and function. He points out in particular the extent to which dreambooks diverge from beliefs and practices of their times. This question is also explored by Maria Mavroudi, who provides a cross-cultural analysis of dream symbolism and its theoretical background, examining the interaction between the Byzantine and Islamic traditions. Paying particular attention to the late Byzantine period, she focuses on the scholarly Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, who contributed to both dream theory and practice through his epistolographic treatise on dreams and the lengthy dreambook associated with him.

Both Oberhelman and Mavroudi draw extensively from oneirocritical material pertaining to, and enhancing our understanding of, the Byzantine notions of sexuality and gender. Sexuality and gender is the subject of Charis Messis, who looks at erotic dream narratives from a wide range of literary sources. In his twofold analysis Messis distinguishes between religious and secular discourse, both of which nevertheless share similar instructive purposes. Further, he brings out the paramount function of erotic dream narratives in the construction of gender identities. Barbara Tedlock enriches the discussion of gender through her expertise in cultural anthropology and dream studies. She places early Christian material within a cross-cultural and diachronic context. Her analysis, deriving from anthropological field research and theory, is also informed by psychoanalytical concepts. Tedlock emphasizes 'the self-fashioning work of dreaming' and its impact on discourses of gendered identity and gender-bending.

Combining the knowledge of Byzantine literature and psychoanalytic expertise, Catia Galatariotou offers in the last chapter of this book an innovative approach to the series of dream narratives included in a highly self-referential work by the rhetor and philosopher Michael Psellos. As Galatariotou points out from the outset, her study of Psellos' dreams is a test case for psychoanalytical readings of dreams of the past. Moreover, her analysis reinforces the hypothesis of the emergence of individuality and self-expression in eleventh-century Byzantium.

The 13 chapters presented in this volume vividly demonstrate the interpretative possibilities of deciphering Byzantine dreams. We believe that they provide the elements of a coherent though fragmentary history of Byzantine dreaming. It is our hope that these alternative ways of analysing Byzantine dreams will motivate future initiatives that will make more accessible this important component of the Byzantines' symbolic universe.

We warmly thank all our colleagues, who eagerly accepted our invitation to participate in the colloquium and prepared their chapters in view of

the publication. We are also grateful to Anthony Kaldellis, John Davis, Nikos Livanos, Niki Tsironis and John Petropoulos for their help during various stages of the preparation of the volume.[2]

We would like to close on a note of remembrance of our friend and distinguished colleague, Titos Papamastorakis (1961–2010), who generously shared with us his enthusiasm, his creative insights and expertise in many of our endeavours.

Christine Angelidi and George T. Calofonos

[2] Due to unforeseen impediments, it took a rather long time to bring the volume to completion. In the meantime, Paolo Odorico published the paper he read at the Symposium as 'Oneirokritika: Critique des rêves ou critique par les rêves?', in P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris, 2012), 11–22.

List of Contributors

Ilias Anagnostakis, Senior Researcher, Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation

Christine Angelidi, Research Director Emerita, Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation

George T. Calofonos, Research Associate, Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation

Stavroula Constantinou, Associate Professor, University of Cyprus

Carolina Cupane, Privatdozent, Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Catia Galatariotou, Historian and Fellow of the British Institute of Psychoanalysis

Bettina Krönung, Assistant Professor, University of Mainz

Paul Magdalino, Professor of History, Koç University

Maria Mavroudi, Professor of Byzantine History, University of California, Berkeley

Charis Messis, Lecturer, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales

Margaret Mullett, Director of Byzantine Studies, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

Steven M. Oberhelman, Professor of Classics, Texas A&M University

Barbara Tedlock, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, State University of New York at Buffalo

This page has been left blank intentionally

Note on the Spelling of Names

Names of persons and places are given in the form adopted by *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* ed. A. Kazhdan et al. (New York and Oxford, 1991). Thus we have used Prokopios and Kyros rather than Procopius and Cyrus, but John rather than Ioannes.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum*
AnBoll	*Analecta Bollandiana*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
ByzF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
JbAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JEChSt	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan et al. (New York and Oxford, 1991)
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66)
PLP	*Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. E. Trapp et al. (Vienna, 1976–)
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
REG	*Revue des Études Grecques*
RESEE	*Revue des Études Sud-est Européennes*
RHR	*Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*
RSBN	*Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*
SOsl	*Symbolae Osloenses*

TAPhA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
TAPS	*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*
ThWNT	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*

Chapter 1
Dreaming in the *Life of Cyril Phileotes*

Margaret Mullett

There is a single image in twelfth-century art which represents the work of contributors to this volume.[1] In it the mother of Basil I is shown sharing her dream with a woman dream-interpreter. In the same way we lay out our dream narratives, offer our interpretations and wait for the community to comment and lead us to wiser readings. Unlike the Byzantines telling their dreams to a single wise interpreter, or, like emperors on campaign, consulting a single dreambook,[2] we need reactions from the representatives of many disciplines: history, philology, psychology, psychiatry, anthropology. For dreams can be many things: a view into the future, a manifestation of the personal past, a means of approaching the divine, a mechanism for healing, a plot device, a medieval cinema, or an alternative plane of existence.[3]

---

[1] Madrid Codex vitr. 26-2, fol. 84r, see V. Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes in Madrid* (Leiden, 2002), fig. 203.

[2] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Ὅσα δεῖ γίνεσθαι τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ὑψηλοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ῥωμαίων μέλλοντος φοσσατεῦσαι*, ed. J.F. Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions* (Vienna, 1990), 106.199 and 211 (comment).

[3] Tertullian, *De anima* 42.3, ed. J.H. Waszink (Amsterdam, 1947), 58, sees dreams as a foretaste of the afterlife; oneirocritical dreambooks assume that dreams are an encoded message from the future; on a repressed past see S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A.A. Brill (Ware, 1997) and on him I. Grubrich-Simitis, 'How Freud Wrote and Revised his *Interpretation of Dreams*. Conflicts around the Subjective Origins of the Book of the Century', in D. Pick and L. Roper (eds), *Dreams and History*. *The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis* (Hove and New York, 2004), 23–36; on approaching the divine, P.R.L. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), 65; on dreams and healing M. Hamilton, *Incubation or the Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches* (London, 1906), and C. Stewart, 'Ritual Dreams and Historical Orders: Incubation between Paganism and Christianity', in D. Shankland (ed.), *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878–1920* (Istanbul, 2004), 31–53; for dreams used as historical source M. Angold¸ 'The Autobiographical Impulse in Byzantium', *DOP* 52 (1998), 225–57, and P. Hatlie, 'Friendship and the Byzantine Iconoclast Age', in J. Haseldine (ed.), *Friendship and Friendship Networks in the Middle Ages* (London, 1998), 137–52; on plot device S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides. The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*

And it seems to me that all these possibilities are open for us: compared with classicists we have but exhausted the potential of dreaming.[4] Byzantinists have contributed to dreamwork on a wider compass at various conferences and in various volumes,[5] there have been a few theses,[6] a Belfast day school, important studies of the *oneirokritika*[7] and of Achmet[8] in particular, and of course the Athens project.[9] There is a real possibility at present of making plans for future research in the field. But whatever we may do, together or separately, in future, we now do what we do. So my own concern at this point is literary. This is not a bad place to be: after all Meg Alexiou's brilliant analysis, uninformed as it was by ancient dream theory, of the levels of consciousness in *Hysmine and Hysminias* made space for MacAlister's reading, which makes dream an event rather than a level of narrative, where Ingela Nilsson excels;

(London and New York, 1996); on cinema, H. Hunt, 'Dreams as Literature/Science of Dreams: An Essay', *Dreaming* 1.3 (1991), 235–42.

[4] Work on dreaming by classicists preceded E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), chapter 4: 'Dream-Pattern and Culture-Pattern', 102–34; each of G. Devereux, *Dreams in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1976), J.S. Hanson, 'Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity', *ANRW* II.33.2 (Berlin and New York, 1980), 1395–427, S.F.R. Price, 'The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidoros', *Past & Present* 113 (1986), 3–37, and J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990) marks a new stage of research.

[5] For example papers by C. Angelidi, G.T. Calofonos and D.I. Kyrtatas, in D.I. Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου. Η χρήση των ονείρων στην ελληνική και ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα* (Herakleion, 1993), and by G. Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi', in T. Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo. Seminario internazionale Roma, 2–4 ottobre 1983* (Rome, 1985), 37–55.

[6] For example G.T. Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy* (MPhil; Birmingham, 1994); M.H. Kenny, *Dreams and Visions in the Thought-world of the Byzantines from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (PhD; Queen's University Belfast, 2001); I. Csepregi, *The Compositional History of Greek Christian Incubation Miracle Collections. Saint Thecla, Saints Cosmas and Damian, Saints Cyrus and John, Saint Artemios* (PhD; Central European University, 2007) and one currently on sleep and sleeplessness by Nikolaos Barkas (Queen's University Belfast).

[7] S.M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium. Six Oneirocritica in Translation with Commentary and Introduction* (Aldershot, 2008).

[8] S.M. Oberhelman, *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet. A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams* (Lubbock TX, 1991); M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation. The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, 2002).

[9] C. Angelidi, S. Bussès, G.T. Calofonos, K. Nikolaou, 'Η ονειρική εμπειρία στο Βυζάντιο. Πρόγραμμα κατάρτισης και ηλεκτρονικής έκδοσης στο διαδίκτυο βάσης δεδομένων', in M. Tziatzi-Papagiannis and G. Papagiannis (eds), *7η Συνάντηση Βυζαντινολόγων Ελλάδος και Κύπρου* (Komotini, 2011), 398–403.

Carolina Cupane's distinctive voice is to be heard elsewhere in this volume.[10] Rather than the novel where it started, or history, where I have recently made a small contribution,[11] or even letters like Jerome's, so revealing to Patricia Cox Miller,[12] I want to look at how dreams function in an experimental twelfth-century Saint's Life.

The mid-twelfth-century text is of a suburban portmanteau saint of the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries with ascetic credentials, a quite extraordinary family life and imperial clients.[13] While we might imagine that visions might be uninteresting, as very much the stuff of hagiography, I have suggested in various places that it is experimental, in the sense that it is generically hybrid, integrating a progressive ascetic anthology with the narrative, and (harder to do) showing more general change in the genre as a result of Bakhtin's novelisation.[14] What I want to do in this chapter is look at the dreams at a level of story-telling, and decide whether they are experimental in terms of narrative, but also in terms of dreaming. I am prepared to include, as I think it is good practice, *enypnia*, *oneiroi* and *phantasiai*, both waking, hypnagogic and sleeping experiences, *onar* and *hypar*.[15]

---

[10] M. Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*', *BMGS* 3 (1977), 23–43; MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides*; C. Cupane, 'Eros basileus: la figura di eros nel romanzo bizantino d'amore', *Atti dell'Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arte di Palermo*, ser. 4, 33.2 (1974), 243–97; I. Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure: Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eumathios Makrembolites' Hysmine and Hysminias* (Uppsala, 2001); see also the contribution of C. Cupane in this volume.

[11] *Narration et communication à Byzance au XIIe siècle* (Paris, forthcoming), chapter 2. On dream narratives in historiography, see the contributions of I. Anagnostakis, G.T. Calofonos and P. Magdalino in this volume.

[12] P. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, 1994), 205–31.

[13] Nicholas Kataskepenos, *Βίος καὶ πολιτεία καὶ μερικὴ θαυμάτων διήγησις τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Κυρίλλου τοῦ Φιλεώτου συγγραφεὶς παρὰ τοῦ ὁσίου Νικολάου τοῦ Κατασκεπηνοῦ* (henceforth: *VCyrilPhil*), ed. E. Sargologos, *La Vie de saint Cyrille le Philéote, moine byzantine (+1110)* (Brussels, 1964).

[14] M. Mullett, 'Literary Biography and Historical Genre in the Life of Cyril Phileotes by Nicholas Kataskepenos', in P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds), *Les vies des saints* à *Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique?* (Paris, 2004), 387–410; M. Mullett, 'Novelisation in Byzantium: Narrative after the Revival of Fiction', in J. Burke et al. (eds), *Byzantine Narrative. Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Melbourne, 2006), 1–28.

[15] On the vocabulary of dreams and visions see Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 27–8; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 23–6; Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy*, esp. 162–4 (diagrams); on the significance of the categorization of dreams and visions in a society see B. Kilborne, 'On Classifying Dreams', in B. Tedlock (ed.), *Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations* (2nd edn; Santa Fe, NM, 1992), 171–93.

There are 15 cases of dreams or visions in the text. Some strike me as unexceptional and the kind of dream which establishes sanctity, others are more complex and harder for us to read. In two cases we see the reaction of the saint to the dreams of others, while another non-subjective dream advances the plot without highlighting issues of *diakrisis*, or oneirocriticism. Only one is recounted in any detail, and that is one of the darker and less comprehensible dreams. In the passages quoted below, technical terms for dream type and trigger vocabulary are shown in bold and senses and emotions are italicized.

At the beginning, stages in the portmanteau saint's development are signalled by dreams. Chapters 6–9 show Cyril settling into a pattern of *askēsis* in the family home after his wife's decision in chapter 6 to do all the work of the farm so that he can live a quiet life as an ascetic and hesychast in a cell inside the house. Chapter 10 shows him acting on the way-of-life established with a story about his *philadelphia* in escorting a young woman to visit her mother. As a reward, or to point out his virtue, he receives a vision from the personification of Theocharia who brings him happiness. We are told the following:

> And that night, when he handed the young woman back to her mother, the saint ***saw*** **in a dream-like vision** a woman beautiful in aspect, wrapped in a **stole** as white as snow. Her mantle covered the whole earth. When he *saw* her, he said to her, 'My Lady, who are you? And why have you come?' And she said, 'My name is Theocharia, and I have come to visit you'. And with this word, see that she embraced him and covered him with her mantle. The inexpressible perfume which he *smelt* immediately made him come to himself and filled him with *joy*, *happiness*, and *pleasure*. For thus God knows how to give back glory to those who glorify him.[16]

So we know he saw a divine personage because she is beautiful, dressed in white with an enormous mantle. He does not know who she is, but asks her and she identifies herself. He both hears and smells her, and we are told his reaction in terms of emotions.

In a pair of chapters on *euergesia* and *philoxenia*, chapter 12 offers a vision. It marks the saint's progression to be an Almsgiver, but also helps the plot, since a traveller thereby finds his way to Cyril's door. He asks for the house of Kyriakos the Merciful, and Cyril (Kyriakos) replies that he is called Kyriakos, no-one else in the village is called Kyriakos, but he didn't realize that he was also called the Merciful. The traveller replies:

> In this very bad weather I had lost attention and **in my daydream found myself in a storm of logismoi**. I strengthened myself by trust in God and I asked him to close his eyes on my numerous faults and to show me a way of escape. While

[16] *VCyrilPhil* 10.3, ed. Sargologos, 76.

> I was praying like this, a soldier on horseback, very beautiful, **presented himself** to me and said, 'Don't be distressed: God will take care of you'. And showing me from far-off this place, he added, 'When you arrive, seek out the house of father Kyriakos the Merciful and he will look after you'. This is how he spoke with me. But I don't know what happened to the man who was speaking with me. For the love of truth, it is for this reason that I ask you, my Lord.[17]

So he is praying, and the vision declares itself through its beauty, though we never identify the horseman, and, its purpose served, we move on. There is no doubt about these visions, nor is there in those where Cyril gains useful skills.

Once Cyril was established as an ascetic in the monastery, there is a group of these. Chapter 26 is about the uses of reading, and it begins with Cyril's experience of learning the psalms by heart. He had only got halfway when he gave away the book to a poor man, and soon regretted it. He was mourning its loss when he managed to sleep and

> a man clothed in white **appeared to him** and said to him: 'Father Cyril, why are you not chanting?' And he replied, 'My lord, God knows that I have chanted all the psalms and all the prayers that I know'. He said to him, 'You haven't chanted the psalter'. And the saint said to him, 'I don't have a psalter any more: I chanted what I knew'. And he said to him, 'Get up and we'll sing together'. Which they did not once, but twice, then he disappeared.[18]

It is simple: we never know the identity of the apparition, sight and sound alone are involved. The result is Cyril's refound and increased competence.

Later, after the pivotal chapter 29 which marks the transition from Cyril's development as an ascetic and his mature career, there are further examples of this kind. Chapter 34, the visit of Constantine Choirosphaktes, serves as a foil (as the visit of a good courtier) to the next chapter, the visit of Eumathios Philokales (a bad courtier). But the visionary experience is used to frame the story, and to add force to his argument that he should not be bankrolled by Constantine's property. The story begins with a heavenly voice quoting Ps 61(62):11: 'if riches accrue, set not your heart upon them'. Constantine then arrives and makes his offer, and then at the end of the saint's tactful refusal comes his use of the quotation from the Psalms:

> Have you not heard the word of Scripture, if riches accrue, set not your heart upon them? This pious man replied: 'It is written: if riches INCREASE'. The saint replied, 'You quote the text as if you had learned it, I as if someone taught it

[17] *VCyrilPhil* 12.1, ed. Sargologos, 78.
[18] *VCyrilPhil* 26.1, ed. Sargologos, 119.

> to me." Then the saint spoke of the divine voice *which he had kept in his ears*, when he saw no-one, and added: 'He who is not in need and takes something, draws a double dishonour. He takes without being in need and in giving good to another he falls into vainglory ...'[19]

So the vision enables him to out-argue the aristocrat, on account of a voice heard (whose we never know) when he was reclining on his rush mat. It may not always be a new skill that is demonstrated. In chapter 33, Cyril shows his communication with the world of the divine by interpreting correctly certain signs of a recent death in the monastery.

> One day, when the saint was **praying**, *he smelled* a pleasant scent, as if it came from a great deal of incense. He collected himself and asked what this could mean, when *he heard* the singing of several sweet and melodious voices.[20]

He strikes the *sēmantron*, a *mathētēs* comes and the monastery springs into action on the assumption that the brother has died. And in chapter 36, the gift of prophecy claimed for him elsewhere rather tenuously is demonstrated through a dream. It is a wonderful dream, narrated in the first person and in present tense, in response to Nicholas' (the biographer's) idle question about the news from the Norman War. The context is the saint's prayers for the emperor as he knelt on his rush mat:

> After I finished my nightly doxology, having the custom of remembering the emperors in my prayer, I the unworthy, I began to offer a supplication to God with tears and pain of my soul for him. And who is it who does not pray for such a man? And so saying the *trisagion* and completing my psalm, The emperor shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, sitting on my rush mat, continuing, as is natural, to preoccupy myself with him. **I fell asleep for a little and I *saw*** that I was travelling into a place which was level and all lit up. And looking around me, *I see* on my right hand an imperial tent with the shape of a church, and a crowd of soldiers around it, and inside the emperor sitting on a high and imperial throne. *Looking around*, on the left hand side *I see* a terrible sea with many little boats on it being smashed and cast up against the shore. And there was there lying down a huge dog, black, having blood-red eyes, looking towards the emperor. There was some dignitary holding him tied up with a chain. Then *I saw* after a little the same brilliant soldier dragging the dog with force and going up, throwing him at the

[19] *VCyrilPhil* 34.3, ed. Sargologos, 145.
[20] *VCyrilPhil* 33.1, ed. Sargologos, 142.

> feet of our most blessed emperor. And as it seems to me so will he subject him. And with God's help this is what happened. But this is how it was.[21]

Light and colour flood this simple but detailed account. For once the word prophecy is not used; the vividness and the accuracy make the case for him. As well as progress in the ascetic life, dreams often mark crucial transitions in Cyril's life and the structure of the work. One such is the story of how he escaped from the Pechenegs, built a little hut in the marshes and then went to his brother's monastery and had himself tonsured with the name of Cyril. Then he proceeded to build himself a retreat:

> The place where the saint wanted to construct his cell, as he himself told me, was covered with thistles. And *he saw* in the middle of the thistles a column standing, and ***having seen*** **this several times** he asked the brothers, 'What is that column set up in the middle of the prickles?' But they, not seeing anything, were in amazement. Having asked them the question twice or thrice, but without learning any more, the saint realized that it was a miraculous sign. He enthusiastically constructed a little cell and entering it he gave the customary prayers to God and said, 'This is the place of my rest for the ages of ages; here will I live for I have chosen it'.[22]

The supernatural nature of this column is established because other monks could not see it. A more important turning point for the narrative, though not for Cyril's career, is in chapter 29, a long account of how during another Pecheneg onslaught Cyril stayed in a monastery on the Propontis and suffered from the *phthonos* of the *proestos*. He prevails through humility, then dreams:

> That night it **seemed to the saint** that he was on a very high tower. Below was a space which stretched out on all sides. There *he saw* a very large serpent which loomed up, *hissing* and coming towards him with its great mouth open. The saint estimated that the chasm of its mouth would hold thirty or more men. The serpent launched itself to approach the saint. He, not knowing what to do, turned this way and that and *saw* a reed lying at his feet. He took it, hit the serpent with it once; it died and fell, splitting into two. From it came a *smell so fetid that the saint was unable to bear it* and came to himself. He said to me: 'The reed is humility, although I am far from humble, and the serpent is the demon of pride. If I had spoken back to the *proestos* who was rebuking me, I would have been

[21] *VCyrilPhil* 36, ed. Sargologos, 154.
[22] *VCyrilPhil* 22.3, ed. Sargologos, 107.

> devoured. But because I fell at his feet, bore his reproaches and criticized myself, the commandment of Christ delivered me from the mouth of the monster'.[23]

The transition is marked by this dream which explains after the event rather than instructing in advance. We hear the explanation through the biographer Nicholas, long after the event, but the dreaming itself was after reconciliation and justification, followed in the text by Cyril's reflections on the importance of humility. He then makes the final breach with the world:

> After being tonsured the saint did not want to see again his closest relations or to converse with them. For desire for God has extinguished desire for relatives.[24]

It is the debate over monastic leadership which is underlined in the dream and sets him free to live the ascetic life. The dream is not signalled as such, simply that night he appears to be standing … and it goes on. Vivid description does not require sophisticated categorization. Similarly straightforward are the dreams after his death. The first is a vision of his ascension, which I have always thought resembles that of Neophytos the Enkleistos.[25] He merits a full first-person dream narrative:

> There was an old woman, pious and Godfearing, whose confidence in the saint was great. She said with conviction to some of them who suffered from incredulity: 'I am unworthy of heaven and earth, but I have **seen in a vision and not in a dream** (*hypar* not *onar*), two men wearing brilliant garments; *I could not see* their face; they were holding father Cyril to right and left and chanting this psalm: Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered, let them also that hate him flee before. The *sweetness of their voices was unspeakable*. When they arrived at the height of the sun, Behold you *saw* the heavens open, and the holy man, together with those with him, were covered with an ineffable light. When they arrived at the height to the heaven, *as I was looking at them* again, here, *I saw* the heavens open, and the saint, with those who accompanied him, was covered with an *unbearable* light. His vestment was white like the snow. I, the miserable one, not being able to support this light, *I was troubled* and went back to myself'.[26]

---

[23] *VCyrilPhil* 29.7, ed. Sargologos, 132–3.

[24] *VCyrilPhil* 29.12, ed. Sargologos, 136.

[25] For the ascension of Neophytos, in which he is represented (uniquely) being raised to heaven by the archangels Michael and Gabriel, with an inscribed prayer that he may join the company of angels see R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London, 1985), fig. 93 and discussion 241–2. See also C. Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint. The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge, 1991), 131ff.

[26] *VCyrilPhil* 55.3, ed. Sargologos, 261.

Though she makes a claim which she thinks will advance her cause, internal elements do it for her. Sound, light, sweet music, white garments, all the signs are there. The white garments are usually worn by angels, and here they convey Cyril to heaven. The old woman's narrative went on to include stories of Klapas' healing, and to conclude:

> But why speak of Klapas? The saint was delivered from his own maladies and afflictions many other afflictions, and those of many other people. And he did it in a grander manner when he had left the earth and when his head was discovered, he contemplated the glory of the Lord. These were the words pronounced by this worthy old woman.[27]

This led to Nicholas' discovery of the head 11 years later, and to another vision, as seen by the widow Phokas:

> Suffering terribly, **she *saw* once in her sleep** a very august woman who said to her, 'It is in vain that you are tiring yourself and consult doctors; you cannot be healed any way other than by the head of the venerated *gerōn*, of father Cyril'. *Having seen this and heard it* two or three times, she talked about it in her neighbourhood.[28]

But she didn't know what to do because the head had not yet been found. When it was, she took action and recovered her sight. All these dream experiences underline the worthiness and the spiritual progression of the saint, especially at key points in the narrative. But these are only two-thirds of the narratives in the *Life*.

Some dreams are exceptions in that they have a more trivial function in the narrative. One such is chapter 25 which tells of a false step taken by Cyril. The *Life* is very clear in that economic activity beyond survival is not to be countenanced, and we hear that Cyril makes cowls to ward off accidie, the professional vice of ascetics, rather than to make money. Here he is persuaded into sending them to market, but clearly has second thoughts:

> He once gave eleven cowls he had made with his own hands to a Christ loving man who went to Anchialos to sell them for wheat, remembering that neither did we eat any man's bread for nought but these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. But when he went, the man forgot to take them. And returning with sadness he went off to the saint, asking forgiveness and relating his false step. The saint said to him, 'Your doings are not the cause of what happened, but Christ. For *I saw* in a dream a man, beautiful and fearsome

[27] *VCyrilPhil* 55.3, ed. Sargologos, 262.
[28] *VCyrilPhil* 56.2, ed. Sargologos, 263.

> in appearance, saying to me, "Abba Cyril, why did you give the cowls to that man and not to me? For if you had given them to me I would have taken them there, no problem". And I said to him, "And who are you, my lord?" And he said, "I am called Elpidios". And I again said, "I hope in God that if these things are not thought unworthy, I shall give them to you and to no other". For I realized, brother, that God is the hope and nurturer of all. So it was not you, but my Lord who was the cause of you bringing these things back'.[29]

The dream here serves to smooth over the embarrassment both of the man who forgot the cowls and of the saint who has decided not to sell them. And chapter 27: here Cyril's son wants to join the monastery but is unsure: he has to choose between his mother and sister on the one hand and his father on the other. Cyril then dreams, and it persuades him how to proceed with his son:

> That night, the saint ***saw* in a dream** a figure clothed in white and bright to the eyes asked him for the sacrament, and as he had some in his hand he gave it to him. When he woke and understood the sense of the dream, he wished to test the boy through his family affection not once but twice and thrice …[30]

Cyril knows how to interpret this dream, as he did with the dragon in the dream of humility, and it is clear that dream interpretation was something that spiritual fathers did along with hearing *logismoi*. In chapter 31 a monk comes to him and tells him of a disturbing dream:

> Having repeated this prayer for the third time, I sat, tired, but my spirit was full of the thought of God in a calm and profound peace. Then, **whether I had been seized by sleep or not I don't know exactly**, a delicate, snowy *to see*, hand **appeared** and gave me *a blow* on my right cheek which was neither violent nor light. And that hand was so perfumed that for a whole week my face gave off a pleasant *scent*. At the same time as it gave me *the blow*, *I saw* the hand extending from the wrist. For a whole week I was not hungry for bodily food. And so, Abba, these things which happened to me, how am I to think of them, from God or from the devil? For my mind is torn about them.[31]

The monk poses a key question for monastic dreaming. Where do dreams come from?[32] This is what *diakrisis* is for, and that is what monastic heroes

[29] *VCyrilPhil* 25.1, ed. Sargologos, 117–8.

[30] *VCyrilPhil* 27.2, ed. Sargologos, 122.

[31] *VCyrilPhil* 31.2, ed. Sargologos, 138.

[32] For consideration of the oneirological theories of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Sceptics, Neoplatonists, Iamblichos, Macrobius, and Philo see Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy*, 48–70; for Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasios of

have cultivated.[33] We might have been influenced by the fact that the monk is addressing his guardian angel when the hand appears and hits him. But Cyril hears the story, makes an analogy and decides that the sweet smell, the whiteness of the hand and above all the fact that the monk was not hungry for a week is testimony to the divine nature of the dream. All is well.

But all is not well in our last two dreams. One is narratologically complex, the other an extraordinary account. The first comes at the height of Cyril's career, the other as the first signs of old age.

Nicholas Tells a Story which Includes a Dream Narrative

We have just had an account of Cyril's way of life, and we are soon to see him fasting and resisting demonic attack before hosting his most important series of imperial visitors: Alexios twice, the *protostrator* Michael (in preparation) and George Palaiologos (in support).[34] Nicholas' story in chapter 42 shows the developing relationship of biographer and subject.[35] Nicholas' questions ease along the florilegium throughout, so as to give us the impression that he is a fly on the wall at the most intimate discussions of Cyril and his wife: he is very much the author in the text. He is with Cyril when they meet the greedy monk or overhear an argument between *proestos* and monks, and it is his question about the Norman War which sparks the Bohemond prophecy.[36] We see him develop in three stories which bear on him rather than Cyril, of which this is one (the others are his gastric illness cured by the spring, and his decision to move monastery),[37] and at the end we see Cyril's physical decline through his

Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrios, John Klimax, Nikephoros Ouranos, Theodore Daphnopates, Psellos and John Italos, see Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 55–82; on Synesios, see Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy*, 80–81, and Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 62–5; on Manuel II, see Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 78–81, G.T. Calofonos, 'Manuel II Palaiologos: Interpreter of Dreams?', *ByzF* 16 (1991), 447–55, and M. Mavroudi's contribution in this volume. The vast majority of Byzantine oneirologists thought dreams came from one of three sources: (1) the human body, mind and soul itself, (2) from God and (3) from demons. Byzantines also subscribed to the 'two gates' theory from Hom. *Od*. 19.560–567 in which the ivory gate represents the source of false dreams and the horn gate that of truth: cf. Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy*, 38–41.

[33] On diakrisis see A.D. Rich, *Discernment in the Desert Fathers. Diakrisis in the Life and Thought of Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Milton Keynes, 2007).

[34] *VCyrilPhil* 47, 51, 46, 48.3, ed. Sargologos, 225–35, 243–4, 211–15, 237.

[35] *VCyrilPhil* 42, ed. Sargologos, 195–206.

[36] *VCyrilPhil* 3, 6, 40, 39.1, ed. Sargologos, 48–55, 65–8, 186–91, 167.

[37] *VCyrilPhil* 30, 49, 36, ed. Sargologos, 136–7, 242, 154.

eyes, coming to find him in a dreadful state, struggling with the *mathētēs* to look after him properly.[38]

Chapter 42 is long and involved. It is not about dreaming, it is about tears.[39] It begins with an apparently naive question from Nicholas ('can you weep whenever you want?') which Cyril responds to with four sections of florilegium about tears. Nicholas then prompts him to talk about the tears that come from demonic attack. Cyril isn't really interested but talks briefly about the dangers of vainglory. Then we understand. Nicholas has a story to tell and is determined to tell it. He doesn't know about servile tears or filial tears – but he does know something about tears which come from the Devil. Cyril tells him to go ahead. Nicholas' story (42.8–13) is long and involved, and it hinges on a monk he, Nicholas, as monastic superior (he is himself called *hosios*, often used of monastic founders), took in. Two sections (8 and 13) concern him, telling the rise and fall of his monastic career, from army veteran playing the fool and living on cabbage parings to disgraced hesychast, running round town naked, 'eating and doing what is not appropriate', playing the holy fool.[40] Three sections in the middle tell of his spiritual father at Androsthenion, of excellent Black Mountain pedigree, his pre-eminence in *penthos* and his conversations with Nicholas. His sickness is described, the doctors are clueless and Nicholas diagnoses it as a result of extraordinary weeping:

> You wept to the words of compunction of your book and you didn't hold back; you gave yourself to weeping without measure because of your love for God, and you emptied through your eyes al the water of your body. You are dehydrated and you can neither eat nor drink; the proof of my words is that you taste water without cease but because of your weakness you cannot drink. Nature is trying to replace what is missing.[41]

Nicholas takes away his copy of the katanyktic canon, but restores it when the *gerōn* is on the verge of death, and the *gerōn* (Auxentios we are now told he is called) sends him his *mathētēs*, the cabbage-eating veteran. It becomes clear that he has aspirations to emulate his *gerōn*, and Nicholas is suspicious. He sets another monk to watch him but is already convinced of some demonic involvement. When challenged the monk showed arrogance and Nicholas took the opportunity to expel him from his monastery. He then goes to a monastery

[38] *VCyrilPhil* 54, 55.1, ed. Sargologos, 255–60.

[39] *VCyrilPhil* 42, ed. Sargologos, 195–206.

[40] *VCyrilPhil* 42.8, 42.13, ed. Sargologos, 200, 204–5; cf. 15, ed. Sargologos, 86–8. See S. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford, 2006).

[41] *VCyrilPhil* 42.9–11, ed. Sargologos, 200–3, esp. 42.10, p. 202.

in the city and becomes a hesychast. And immediately he comes unstuck. He sees, *aisthetōs*,

> the demons as deacons of the Great Church having with them some imperial person (*basilikon*) and saying to him that 'The emperor, having taken the counsel of the synod, has decided to elect you patriarch because of your virtue, to bring you from mourning to consolation. Blessed, says the Gospel, are them that mourn for they shall be comforted'. *Hearing this*, he declared himself unworthy of such an honour. But the alleged deacons insisted: 'God has taken in affection your work and tears and has even led the emperor to think of you'.[42]

He is fooled, and falls:

> When they had left him, the future patriarch set out immediately under the pretext of hiding himself in humility. Going off to some people he knew, he went in and said, 'Close the doors, the doors'. And they said, 'What is this?' And compelled by them he said, 'I am going now to be patriarch'. Amazed, they stared at him and didn't know what to say or to think ...[43]

So he throws off his clothes and reverts to his life as a fool. Note that Nicholas was in no doubt of the origin of the vision, and note the emphasis on the senses, *aisthetōs*. Cyril picks up the story and comments:

> One of the wise men seeing a rich fool eating olives and drinking water said to him, if you have dined with your senses, you will not sup *without your senses*. In the same way, the brother wouldn't have become a fool with his senses if he hadn't played the fool with all his senses.[44]

He dilates on the dangers of pride, but there is more at stake than this, there are the dangers of heresy. Messalianism lurks round the corner where a monk believes that through prayer he can see visions with his senses.[45]

---

[42] *VCyrilPhil* 42.13, ed. Sargologos, 204.

[43] *VCyrilPhil* 42.13, ed. Sargologos, 204.

[44] *VCyrilPhil* 42.14, ed. Sargologos, 204.

[45] On Messalianism see A. Louth, 'Messalianism and Pelagianism', *Studia patristica*, 17.1 (1982), 127–35; J. Meyendorff, 'St Basil, Messalianism and Byzantine Christianity', *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 24 (1980), 219–34; C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart. The Messalian Controversy In History, Texts and Language to 431* (Oxford, 1991).

The Devil's Liturgy and the Beginning of the End for Cyril

This story has added resonance when we come to a parallel in Cyril's own life, the famous story of the visit of John Komnenos in chapter 53. 'Buy the book and read it!' said Festugière in his review.[46] It is another long story, set clearly at the onset of Cyril's old age. Cyril is used to receiving John but on one occasion his visit is different. The devil shows Cyril, through the means of his senses:

> near his cell, an erected marquee. Inside it was a couch, strewn and covered with red rugs, where the *sebastos* was sitting, surrounded by a crowd. *Seeing him* opposite him, the saint was *amazed*. He blamed at once the *sebastos* for behaving like this against custom, and his brothers for not preventing him.[47]

They go through the usual exchanges but Cyril is worried. He asks if he can set up a liturgy in Cyril's cell and Cyril gives him carte blanche. *Kata phantasian* he sees

> on the interior of his cell, an altar, the *prothesis*, patens, chalices and veils for the holy vessels. Then false priests entered with their co-celebrants, made the preparations and began their loathsome liturgy. The saint then *saw*, *with the eyes of his body*, that in the twinkling of an eye the roof of his cell had been taken off with a rush and it became spacious enough to hold the accursed *sebastos* and his retinue.[48]

Cyril cannot hear much and finds himself incapable of taking communion. The next five sections show Cyril's recovery from the event. We knew from the beginning that it was a *phantasia* of the Devil: Cyril thought it was real. In section 4[49] Cyril has a dialogue with his *mathētēs* and learns that not everyone can see the false *sebastos* and his marquee (picking up the vision of the column as he took his final step to become a monk); in section 5[50] he has a conversation with a specialist monk about the implications; in 6[51] he reflects and assimilates; in 7[52] Nicholas talks to him, appropriating the florilegium (Nicholas comes of age as a *gerōn*); and in 8[53] Cyril recovers from the experience and recovers the

[46] A.-J. Festugière, 'Notes sur la vie de Saint Cyrille le Philéote', *REG* 80 (1967), 430–444, and *REG* 81 (1968), 80–109.

[47] *VCyrilPhil* 53.2, ed. Sargologos, 249–50.

[48] *VCyrilPhil* 53.3, ed. Sargologos, 250.

[49] *VCyrilPhil* 53. 4, ed. Sargologos, 251.

[50] *VCyrilPhil* 53.5, ed. Sargologos, 251–2.

[51] *VCyrilPhil* 53.6, ed. Sargologos, 252–3.

[52] *VCyrilPhil* 53.7, ed. Sargologos, 253–4.

[53] *VCyrilPhil* 53.8, ed. Sargologos, 254–5.

florilegium. But this is temporary: he again sees the *sebastos*, tries to hit him and hits the wall instead. The vision demonstrates to us, in contrast to the vision of the column,[54] and in contrast to the tented vision of Bohemond,[55] how his powers are failing. The story of the deterioration of Cyril had perhaps begun in chapter 43 when Nicholas finds him physically devastated by demonic attack.[56] But then he knew it was demonic. His last illness is treated in graphically realistic terms: he wanders off into the night to relieve himself and falls and has to be rescued the next morning; he gets bedsores, he can't manage to fast, he is incontinent. Nicholas is present at his death:

> When I approached him I smelled an unbearable smell: having seen him, I filled a jug of warm water, and having stripped him, I poured it over him. And it was a terrible sight to be seen. The tender parts of his buttocks and thighs were completely stinking and full of worms from being bedridden and the urine. He lay in the warm water, moving only his holy hands and moving lightly. I renewed the water two or three times and changed his clothes and the bedding; then he lived a few more days without eating. Then he put his blessed soul in the hands of God.[57]

And that is it. No foreknowledge of death, no melodious sounds, no waft of incense. It is a very unhagiographic death, prepared for by unhagiographic dreaming, by a fantasy rather than an *onar*.[58] But it is the death of a *gerōn* who at the height of his powers handled dream as a plane of reality as real and familiar as the monastery around him.

Conclusion

So, let us take stock.

From a narrative point of view:

> Dreams provide the only colour (literally) in the text, and also a strong sensual charge: smells and blows, lights and sweet sounds. They have emotional force, creating happiness or relief. They progress the plot. They point up structural shifts in the narrative and key moments in the career

[54] *VCyrilPhil* 22.3, ed. Sargologos, 107–8.

[55] *VCyrilPhil* 36, ed. Sargologos, 154.

[56] *VCyrilPhil* 43.1 and 43.4, ed. Sargologos, 206, 208.

[57] *VCyrilPhil* 55.1, ed. Sargologos, 260.

[58] On hagiographic deaths see P.A. Agapitos, 'Mortuary Typology in the Lives of Saints: Michael the Synkellos and Stephen the Younger', in Odorico and Agapitos (eds), *Les vies de saints à Byzance*, 103–35.

of both Cyril and Nicholas. They draw morals, reward the achiever, demonstrate decline.

From a dreaming point of view:

1. They are a varied group of narratives. Four are identified as *hypar*, one of which is '*hypar* not *onar*'. In three more the dreamer is clearly awake, and in a fourth we are not told that the dreamer is asleep, merely reclining on his mat. In no case is any described as *onar* or *oneiros*, but in one the dreamer appears to sleep, in another he sleeps a little and sees, in another *hōra pote kath' hypnous*, in a fourth we are only told that it is at night. In one other the narrator doesn't know whether he was awake or asleep. One is confidently described as a *phantasia* and another is clearly so by analogy. Are these categories significant?

   Well, there is no *enypnion*, no insignificant, non-impactful dream, but in hagiography it could be argued that that would be a waste of space. It is not clear that *hypar* is more highly rated than *onar* despite the certainty of the pious old woman. Cyril's most confident prophetic dream (full of significance for the empire) is after he has slept a little, maybe in the hypnogogic state.[59] Trigger vocabulary is there in force, as well as support vocabulary since only one-third of the cases are given a dreaming identifier. So figures appear, dreamers see, saints seem, dragons loom. The receiver is allowed to decide that dreaming is happening, which is not difficult with all the shining faces and white clothing populating the narrative. The exceptions are the two devil-generated *phantasiai*, where it is clear from the beginning that the monk saw demons as deacons of the Great Church and the devil showed Cyril the tent.[60]
2. Scene-setting is elaborate, for the dream narratives are encased within the delicate relationship of narrative and florilegium. We watch Cyril hear the singing, smell the perfume and make his deductions; we watch him listen to the monk who was hit by the white hand; we watch Nicholas the hagiographer elicit the vision of Bohemond by an idle query about the news of the day. The condition of consciousness we have seen is also quite varied: in nine cases awake, in three unsure (one himself unsure), in three asleep, suggesting a long continuum. In some there is a context of

[59] Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 34–45, citing D. Shacter, 'The Hypnagogic State. A Critical Review of the Literature', *Psychological Bulletin* 83.3 (1976), 452–81, and F. Travis, 'The Junction-point Model. A Field Model of Waking, Sleeping and Dreaming, Relating Dream-witnessing, the Waking/Sleeping Transition, and Transcendental Meditation in Terms of a Common Psychophysiological State', *Dreaming* 4.2 (1994), 91–104.

[60] *VCyrilPhil* 42.13, 53.3, ed. Sargologos, 204, 250.

dream (the waves of *logismoi* experienced by the traveller) or sleep (Cyril's bedtime practices). Time and place are usually recorded.

3. In contrast some of the dreams themselves read as somewhat perfunctory, and the dream figures are not developed or even identified. We know of Theocharia, Elpidios (named for the wordplay with *elpis*?) Bohemond and the sebastos John, but the soldier saint who directed the traveller, the most august lady, the angels of the ascension and the psalm-singing and sacrament-requesting white figures do not reveal themselves. Margaret Kenny suggests that Byzantine dream in hagiography has better developed dream figures than dreamers,[61] but I suspect that is most likely to be true of miracle-collections. Tangible they can be though, witness the giant hand. The rule that angels and Christ appear only to saints, and saints and prophets to ordinary people is broken by the ascension of Cyril.[62] Perhaps this is why the pious old woman was so proud.
4. The impression of variety is sustained in that only the early dreams and the last ones are the kind of audiovisual standard fare suggested by Hanson.[63] Two are purely visual, one sound and smell, one touch, one singalong and visual, and the serpent episode involves sight, sound, smell and touch. Four are told in the first person, but they do not seem to be particularly favoured or significant dreams; though the Bohemond vision gains from its first-person narration, and the proud status-seeking account of the pious old woman has some charm, the Elpidios appearance is inconsequential in the extreme.
5. Genre intervenes in that all but one can be seen as demonstrating the sanctity of the saint, and in that the dreamer, where that is the saint, is more central than the dream figure. The first reception of the narratives is obscured by the genre, since most are third-person accounts, and we cannot hear them told to Nicholas. Only in the Choirosphaktes story

---

[61] Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 106–8, 130.

[62] For the rule see Achmet, *Oneirokritikon*, 11, ed. F. Drexl, *Achmetis oneirocriticon* (Leipzig, 1925), 6.15–17. In this *Life*, saint Cyril sees Theocharia, Alexios and Bohemond. Elpidios sees twice a figure in bright white, a column, and a dragon, and (subversively) the *sebastos* John; he hears a 'divine' voice and smells and hears sweet scents and music. 'Ordinary' dreamers see a soldier saint, a white hand, deacons of the Great Church, the angels of the ascension and also a 'very august woman'. If this can be said to be a rule, it is, in a society concerned with *taxis*, a version of the near Eastern pattern of 'messenger dreams' to high-status recipients and 'symbolic dreams' to lower-status recipients, B. Kilborne, 'On Classifying Dreams', in Tedlock (ed.), *Dreaming*, 171–93, esp. 173–9, drawing on the work of A.L. Oppenheim, 'The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East', *TAPS* 46.3 (1956), 179–373.

[63] Hanson, 'Dreams and Visions', 1409.

does Cyril refer back to a supernatural experience, using it to score over the courtier and clinch his argument about economic support.

Two things are notable about these narratives and show signs of the experiment we are looking for. One is they are not entirely free-standing. Bohemond's tent and John Komnenos' tent, the realization that no-one else can see column or liturgy, and the elaborate and laughable rise and fall of the Messalian monk preparing us for the shock of Cyril's own deterioration show a crafting of the dream record.

Secondly, dreams and *diakrisis* are at the heart of the *Life*, knitted into the plot. And, though these are the kinds of dreaming that do not need oneirocriticism, or open themselves to symbolic interpretation or appear in dreambooks, the dream interpreter is just as important in this text as the dreamer. We watch Cyril hearing the dream narratives as he must have heard *logismoi*, and we hear him draw together the threads of Nicholas' rambling story within a story. The *gerōn* Auxentios was in physical danger from *penthos* and his disciple is in worse, spiritual, danger. Cyril saw the dangers of heresy underlying the katanyktic practice and the folly of expecting *aisthetēn phantasian* through prayer. Ultimately we see Cyril in the hands of another expert in διάκρισις. Both visions and tears come from different sources and it is vital to know the difference. The matter-of-factness of much of Cyril's dreamworld where you hear angelic voices, soldier saints direct travellers to your door and you are bailed out when you give away your psalter is matched by the emphasis on *diakrisis*. Monastic dream interpretation, the poor cousin of the great courtly interpreters and their skilled sisters, comes to the fore in this text. As ever in this text, the point is the judgement and discretion available to the empire if it only took holy men seriously. This is what dreaming is about in this *Life*.

* * *

The great revival of interest in dreams both in the second sophistic and Byzantium came from the *oneirokritika* and in particular the larger prose dreambooks. The discovery that dreaming can tell you about a society in the present of the narrative (rather than the future as dreamers hoped, or the past as Freud originally said) was what got scholars so excited about Artemidoros and then *Achmet*.[64] I suspect that oneirocritical dream systems are one way in which

[64] From the time of Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, chapter 4 (as above, n. 4), the potential for enlightening the present (not the past or future) of the dreamer has been seen but not often realized. For exceptions among Byzantinists see E. Patlagean, 'Byzantium in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in P. Ariès and G. Duby (eds), *A History of Private Life. From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 551–641, and now A. Timotin, *Visions, prophéties et pouvoir à Byzance: étude sur l'hagiographie mésobyzantine (IX–XI siècles)* (Paris, 2010). On past and present see S. Budd, 'The Shark

the Byzantines represented an overview of their own world, the others being visions of the underworld and panoramas of the desert.[65]

But without the systematic corpus of dream narratives to match Steven Oberhelman's corpus of *oneirokritika*, or indeed the body of surviving oneirological works, we are not going to be able to make secure comments on society from texts like the *Life of Cyril*. Even if 'authentic dream experience is rarely recorded in Byzantine literature'[66] – but how do we know? – we need to collect, compare and critique. I end with a problem for which in the absence of such a corpus I have no answer, though I have a guess. In *phantasia*, what are the implications for the reputations of figures impersonated by demons? I have suggested that given the connection between demonology and *Kaiserkritik*[67] there may be a whiff of cordite about the figure of John Komnenos the *sebastos* in Cyril's demonic mass. But then, where, given the excoriatingly negative press given to the cabbage-eating veteran, does that leave the deacons of the Great Church? Do we see here professional jealousy between the *didaskaloi* and the intellectual metropolitan monasticism represented by Nicholas, and was their representation as demons a pleasurable jibe? Until we have the corpus, or I should say, until we make the corpus, we are not going to know, maybe not even then.

> Dreams are among the most complex of all human communications.[68]

---

behind the Sofa. Recent Developments in the Theory of Dreams', in Pick and Roper (eds), *Dreams and History*, 253–70.

[65] M. Mullett, 'Representing Byzantine society', in Athens Dialogues e-journal http://athensdialogues.chs.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/athensdialogues.woa/wa/dist?dis=73.

[66] See the contribution of C. Angelidi in this volume; Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi', in Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo*, 37. See Kenny, *Dreams and Visions*, 48, on modern dream research which undermines any distinction between 'authentic' and 'fictive' dream narratives: C.M. Carswell and W.B. Webb, 'Real and Artificial Dream Episodes. Comparison of Report Structure', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 94.4 (1985), 653–5; C. Cavallero and V. Natale, 'Was I dreaming or did it really happen? A Comparison between Real and Artificial Dream Reports', *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 8.1 (1988–89), 19–24.

[67] F. Tinnefeld, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik in der Byzantinischen Historiographie* (Munich, 1971) together with B. Rubin, 'Zur Kaiserkritik Ostroms', *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* 7 (1953), 453ff., are the foundation documents; nuanced later studies Av. Cameron, 'Early Byzantine Kaiserkriik. Two Case Histories', *BMGS* 3 (1977), 1–17, and P. Magdalino, 'Aspects of Twelfth-century Byzantine Kaiserkritik', *Speculum* 58.2 (1983), 326–46, are otherwise focused. I intend to develop this line of research in *Death of the Holy Man, Death of a Genre* (The Medieval World).

[68] G. Herdt, 'Selfhood and Discourse in Sambia Dream-sharing', in Tedlock (ed.), *Dreaming*, 55.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 2

The Morphology of Healing Dreams: Dream and Therapy in Byzantine Collections of Miracle Stories

Stavroula Constantinou

Byzantine hagiographical narratives abound with dreams and visions.[1] The reason for which devices, such as dreams and visions, are so prominent in hagiography is related to their function as immediate vehicles of miraculous events, the landmarks of sanctity. Dreams and visions have also other functions, both religious and narrative. On a religious level, they provide the texts' heroes and audiences with an access to the divine; through them Christ and His saints come in contact with the faithful to whom they reveal their will, and offer guidance, instruction and solutions to problems related, for instance, to the lack of health, of food and of justice. Additionally, in dreams and visions the divine discloses Christian truths and events of the future. Divine dreams or visions are sent not only to pious Christians for the strengthening of their faith, and for giving solutions to various problems. Recipients of such dreams and visions are also non-Christians, heretics and sinners who are instigated to convert to Christianity or orthodoxy, and to give up their sinful lives.

Apart from the divine, dreams and visions in hagiography serve also the devil in his attempt to seduce the holy protagonist and other persons of the narratives.

---

[1] For the importance of dreams and visions in medieval imagination in general, and in Christian literature in particular, see S.F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992) and J. Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago and London, 1988). As for the prominence of dreams and visions in other Byzantine genres, such as historiography, the novel or the romance, see G.T. Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy* (MPhil; University of Birmingham, 1994), and of the same author, 'Dream Narratives in Historical Writing. Making Sense of History in Theophanes Chronographia', in R. Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Farnham, 2010), 133–43; P.A. Agapitos, 'Dreams and the Spatial Aesthetics of Narrative Presentation in *Livistros and Rhodamne*', *DOP* 53 (1999), 111–47, S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides. The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London and New York, 1996), and I. Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos. Rhetorical Pleasure, Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eumathios Makrembolites' 'Hysmine and Hysminias'* (Uppsala, 2001). See also, the contributions of C. Cupane, P. Magdalino and C. Messis in this volume.

For the pious individual aspiring to achieve holiness, dreams and visions from the devil play a very central role in his/her spiritual improvement, and eventual union with the divine. They operate as tests of the ascetic's ability to resist temptation. The more he/she overcomes temptation, the more self-aware and liberated from human passions he/she becomes.[2]

From a narrative point of view, dreams and visions in hagiographical literature serve important purposes associated with the development of the plot, narrative structure and the attractiveness of the story. In the anonymous miracle collection of St George (possibly eleventh century), for instance, the protagonist of a miracle story, Theopistos, who at the beginning of the narrative loses his cattle, receives a first dream in which the saint gives him instructions about how to find his animals.[3] This dream makes the hero undertake immediate actions through which the plot develops.

A number of visions and dreams, such as Theopistos' dream, keep the story going while others assist the unfolding of the plot by changing its direction. Such an example is a dream of St Porphyrios depicted in his *Life* written by his disciple Mark the deacon in the fifth century. In this dream Christ orders the protagonist to become the bishop of Gaza,[4] a fact that changes his original plans, and leads the narrative to a different direction. Prophetic visions and dreams, on the other hand, which are quite frequent in hagiography, influence the sequence of events and their chronological order, since they forecast something that will happen in the narrative at a later stage.

There are also a number of dreams and visions fulfilling other important narrative functions, such as the preparation of the narrative's closure. This is often the case in Saints' Lives when the protagonist has a dream or a vision informing him/her that his/her death is approaching, an event after which the saint's life story reaches its natural end.[5]

Finally, dreams and visions transferring the protagonist to other worlds, such as those of paradise, heaven and hell, contribute to the attractiveness and

---

[2] In his pioneering work *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago, 1987), G.G. Harpham illustrates in a very graphical way the importance of temptation in the life of the ascetic. For the function of demons in the making of the monk, see also D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk. Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2006).

[3] *Miracles of St George* 5, ed. J.B. Aufhauser, *Miracula S. Georgii* (Leipzig, 1913), 44–64, especially 48–9.

[4] *Life of Porphyrios of Gaza* 13, ed. and Fr. trans. H. Grégoire and M.-A. Kugener, Marc le Diacre, *Vie de Porphyre évêque de Gaza* (Paris, 1930).

[5] See, for instance, the *Life of Synkletike*, ed. L.G. Abelarga, *The Life of Saint Syncletica. Contribution to the Research and Studying of the Early Ascetic* (Thessaloniki, 2002), 263.1178–264.1185.

fascination of the narrative.[6] Hagiographical narratives become interesting and captivating, also with dreams and visions functioning as devices of suspense and surprise.[7]

The dreams and visions depicted in principal hagiographical genres – passion, Saint's Life, collective biography, *Apophthegmata Patrum* and collection of miracles – are numerous and polymorphic,[8] and obviously their investigation in all these genres and in all their forms transgresses the limits of an article. For the present, my interest in dreams and not in visions concerns only the genre of miracle collection, which includes a number of dream (and vision) categories formed according to purpose and content. These fall broadly into seven groups: temptation dreams, prophetic, revelatory, premonitory, warning, edifying and healing dreams.

The most important of all these groups is that of healing dreams, which are most frequently depicted in the genre of miracle collection, since the large majority of miracle stories are about miraculous healings often achieved through the medium of dream. The term 'healing dream' thus refers to any divine presence in the human world during sleep, which is related to a miraculous cure performed by one or more saints upon the suffering body of an individual.[9]

As is obvious, it is because of its significant role in many miracle collections that the category of healing dreams has been chosen as the theme of the present chapter. Here healing dreams will be approached from the perspective of their morphology.[10] What will be mainly examined are the various types of Byzantine healing dreams, their sub-categories, their 'component parts', their structure and

[6] See, for example, the vision of Andrew the Holy Fool through which he is taken by an angel to paradise and from there up to God's throne: *Life of Andrew the Fool*, ed. and Eng. trans. L. Rydén, *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, vol. 2 (Uppsala, 1995), 42.422–62.737, and the dream of Epiphanios, another hero of the same *Life*, in which he is taken by Andrew to hell: 164.2323–168.2380.

[7] Examples of such dreams will be given in the analysis that follows.

[8] For some of the uses of dream and vision in Western hagiography, see M.E. Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders. The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150–1350* (Aldershot, 2007), 100–116.

[9] For the importance of miraculous healings in Byzantine miracle collections and the form that such healings take, see S. Constantinou, 'Grotesque Bodies in Hagiographical Tales. The Monstrous and the Uncanny in Byzantine Collections of Miracle Stories', *DOP* 64 (2010), 43–54.

[10] The term 'morphology' is used here in Vladimir Propp's sense, who argued that a narrative, such as the folktale, has forms and structures through which it could be scientifically examined, as is the case with living organisms. He defined thus morphology as the 'description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole': V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin, 1968), 19.

their relation to each other and the rest of the narrative. The texts used for the analysis attempted in the framework of this chapter are independent miracle collections, and not miracle accounts appended to the end of a Saint's Life or included in an encomium. The examined collections were written in Byzantine Greek between the fifth and the fourteenth centuries.[11]

At this point it should be mentioned that dream as a healing medium is employed much more often by the hagiographers of the early Byzantine period than by those of the later periods. In fact, dream is almost the only healing method in the early collections. In later miracle collections, but also in other contemporary hagiographical genres, such as the Saint's Life and the encomium, healings are mostly achieved through the patients' immediate contact with the saints' miraculous clothes, possessions, coffins, tombs, relics and icons, and also by the consummation of holy oil or water, or their application on the patients' afflicted bodily parts. It seems that from the middle Byzantine period onwards the objects and liquids related to a saint acquired greater importance as a means of healing than dreams. The reason for this change might be associated with the development of saints' cults in the later periods when the Late Antique practice of incubation might have lost its popularity. As Evelyne Patlagean and Alice-Mary Talbot have suggested, a saint's cult in the middle and late periods could be mainly cultivated and maintained through miraculous items and liquids.[12]

Additionally, healing dreams are much fewer in later hagiography because people's attitudes towards them seem to have changed. There are hagiographers who along with their audiences appear to question the divine source of dreams and effectively their function as healing vehicles, as attested by the following comment of Theoktistos the Stoudite expressed in his oration on the translation of Patriarch Athanasios I's relics (late 1320s):

> And let no one ridicule and reproach me with regard to dreams, but remember the dreams, which are recorded in many places in the Gospel and in the Apostle. For when the soul is asleep, it is not disturbed by the body, but has the sweetest repose for itself, and speaks with God on account of its kinship 'with Him', and wanders everywhere, and predicts many future events, as if released from the weight which

[11] For a catalogue of these collections see S. Efthymiadis, 'Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles. A Chronological and Bibliographical Survey', *SOsl* 74 (1999), 195–211 (for all periods), and S.F. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla. A Literary Study* (Washington, DC, 2006), 239–43 (for early Byzantium).

[12] E. Patlagean 'Théodora de Thessalonique: Une sainte moniale et un culte citadin (IXe–XXe siècles)', in S.B. Gajano and L. Sebastiani (eds), *Culto dei santi, istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale* (Rome, 1984), 45–6, and A.-M. Talbot, 'Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts', *DOP* 56 (2002), 159–61.

> drags it down to earth and possessed of blessed strength and unhindered power from all sides but, like God Himself, remaining invisible to human eyes.[13]

Here Theoktistos feels obliged to defend his choice to recount a healing miracle related to a dream. He tries to explain the divine origins of dreams, during which the soul that speaks with God is enabled to foresee the future, by employing the authority of the Bible where God-sent dreams are reported. Even though Theoktistos attempts to convince his audience about the divinity and healing powers of dreams, he himself does not seem to favour this healing method, since only two out of the 39 miracles he includes in his oration contain healing dreams.

In the miracle collections under examination, a healing dream is normally sent during the night to the sufferer or to another person with whom he/she is familiar. In most cases, the dream is the divine response to the sufferer's prayers for a cure addressed to a healing saint. There are instances in which a sufferer may be granted a healing dream without asking for divine help. This occurs when the saint, moved by compassion towards the sufferer's unbearable health problems, decides to offer a cure through the medium of dream. Most healing dreams take place during the ill person's stay in a saint's shrine, while a smaller number of them occur when the dreamers sleep in their own homes or on their way to a saint's shrine.

The healing dreams of Byzantine miracle collections might be divided into three large groups according to the way in which a cure is performed. These are: the corporeal dreams, the medical dreams and the allegorical dreams. Interestingly, the way of healing determines not only the length and structure of each group's dreams, but also their narrative function and significance, as the following analysis will show.

Corporeal dreams are named the healing dreams during which a saint cures a patient by using exclusively his/her own miraculous body that operates as a powerful therapeutic means. According to the way in which the saint's body is involved into a healing, corporeal dreams may be subdivided into two further categories: speech dreams and dreams of bodily contact.

Speech dreams are called the corporeal dreams where a saint accomplishes a therapy through his/her own words, which are performative, since they do what they say.[14] The saint says to the ill dreamer that he/she is healed, and when this person wakes up finds him/herself cured. Such an example is the dream of

---

[13] Translation by A.-M. Talbot, in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Faith Healing in Late Byzantium. The Posthumous Miracles of the Patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople by Theoktistos the Stoudite* (Brookline, MA, 1983), 107.

[14] The performative function of language has been explored by the American philosopher J.L. Austin in his influential work *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford, 1962).

Anthony in miracle 48 from the miracle collection of Kyros and John (seventh century) written by Sophronios the monk and sophist, and probably later patriarch of Jerusalem (634–38). Antony suffers from a strange disease in his entrails and seeks assistance from the saints who with the intention of healing him visit him in a dream after his two-year stay in their shrine. The dream opens with the saints standing before Anthony and addressing him with the following words: 'Behold, we have liberated you from your sufferings, and you will never suffer again from such a disease'. Upon the articulation of these words the dreamer is cured.[15]

In the second category, the dreams of bodily contact, it is the healing saint's hands or feet that perform what his/her miraculous words accomplish in speech dreams. The saint touches, squeezes, hits, kicks or steps upon the dreamer's afflicted bodily part, which is immediately cured. The saint's direct bodily contact with the sufferer's body often takes an unexpected violent form, as a result of which the dreamer's sleep is violently interrupted. The patient wakes up out of the unbearable pain caused by the saint to realize that he/she is cured. A case in point is miracle 17 from the anonymous collection of Thekla (fifth century). Leontios, who after having broken one of his legs suffers terribly and cannot walk, has a dream while sleeping in Thekla's shrine in Seleucia in which the holy woman appears in front of him, and without saying a word, steps on his afflicted foot with such a great force that the man jumps out of pain, and starts walking, and then running.[16]

Violent dreams of this sub-category suggest that sometimes it is through further pain and suffering that a painful and serious illness can be removed. Violence is presented having a purifying effect on the diseased body, an idea sustained not only by violent healing dreams, but also by a number of miracle stories in which a patient is eventually healed after a divine force drives another person of the narrative to violently attack and beat the sufferer.[17]

Both speech dreams and dreams of bodily contact are frequently short and have a simple structure. As already suggested, the dream narrative opens with the saint's appearance in front of the dreamer. Sometimes the saint appears as him/herself, and some others he/she is disguised as a doctor, a stranger, a monk,

---

[15] *Miracles of Kyros and John* 49, ed. N.F. Marcos, *Los Thaumata di Sofronio. Contribuciòn al estudio de la 'incubatio' cristiana* (Madrid, 1975), 355–7. The translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[16] *Life and miracles of Thekla*, ed. G. Dagron, *Vie et Miracles de sainte Thècle* (Brussels, 1978), 336.36–42. For an English translation, see A.-M. Talbot and S.F. Johnson, *Miracle Tales from Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 2–183.

[17] See, for example, *Miracles of Kyros and John* 23.4, ed. Marcos, 286, in which a man suffering from great headaches is forcibly hit on the head by another man, who uses his stick for the blow, and as a result the patient is healed.

a relative of the patient, an illustrious woman and so on.[18] Of course, the healing saints of the examined texts appear disguised not only in corporeal dreams, but in all categories and sub-categories of healing dreams.

In the case of speech dreams, what follows after the saint's epiphany is either a short monologue by the saint saying to the dreamer that he/she is healed, or a brief dialogue between the dreamer and the saint in which the saint, pretending not to know, asks the patient about his/her health problems, or asks whether he/she is seeking a healing. Then the saint states the aforementioned performative words accompanied by a command addressed to the dreamer according to which he/she should thank God for the cure. At this point the speech dream narrative comes to an end.

In some speech dreams, the healing saint asks for more than the dreamer's gratitude. Sts Kyros and John, for instance, in the aforementioned miracle 48 order Antony to return to his house where he should plant a vineyard from which he is expected to produce wine for both himself and the medical needs of the patients staying at their shrine. Here, the cured man has to return the gift of healing by offering services that will help other people to solve their own health problems through the saints' intervention.

In a dream of bodily contact, the saint's arrival to the place where the dreamer lies is followed by the saint's direct contact with the dreamer's body. In the shortest dreams, as indicated by miracle 17 from Thekla's collection mentioned above, without saying anything, the saint touches or attacks the sufferer's body, and at this point the dream ends. In the longer dreams of bodily contact, as occurs with the longer speech dreams, the saint might be presented conversing with the sufferer. Quite often the saint first asks the sufferer to describe his/her health problem, and then orders him/her to expose the afflicted part, which the saint touches or attacks.[19]

There are cases in which a corporeal dream is both a speech dream and a dream of bodily contact, since the saint appears to perform a cure by using simultaneously his/her performative words and miraculous body.[20] Often the corporeal dreams

---

[18] The healing saint assuming most regularly a disguise is Artemios, who, according to Virgil Crisafulli, appears as someone else in about half of his 44 healing miracles: *The Miracles of St. Artemios. A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of the Seventh-Century Byzantium*, trans. and commentary by V.S. Crisafulli and J.W. Nesbitt (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1997), xiii–xv.

[19] See, for example, *Miracles of Artemios* 2 and 5, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia Graeca Sacra* (St Petersburg, 1909; repr. Leipzig, 1975), 2–3 and 5–6.

[20] An example is the healing dream of an eparch, the protagonist of the first miracle of Demetrios' collection written by John, the archbishop of Thessalonike in the seventh century: ed. P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1979), 55–65.

combining both the saint's speech and body as therapeutic means are longer and more sophisticated than simple speech dreams or dreams of bodily contact.[21]

In their vast majority corporeal dreams serve always the same narrative function: they lead the whole miracle story to a closure. After the protagonist's health problem (which constitutes the kernel of the plot) is solved through a corporeal dream, the narrative comes to an end, and the hagiographer goes on to relate another miracle story.

Medical dreams are the most common healing dreams. Patients granted a medical dream might be healed in three different ways: by consuming or applying over the surface of their diseased body a miraculous medicine authored by the saint; by changing their diet and some of their habits after being ordered by the saint; and by undergoing an operation performed by the saint. These three ways of healing in medical dreams lead to the formation of three correspondent categories: pharmacological, prescriptive and surgical dreams.[22]

The medicines referred to in pharmacological dreams could be anything from wax-salve, oil, water, wine and milk from a pious woman's breast to a camel's faeces, and the burnt pubic hair of a lamb mixed with water.[23] In some cases, the saint during the dream brings the healing medicine to the patient, asking or forcing him/her to take it. The patient uses the medicine either during dream or after waking up, and is immediately cured.[24] In other instances, the holy person asks the dreamer to go to his/her shrine and drink holy water from its source,[25] or take oil from his/her holy lamp or some of the wax-salve available

---

[21] See, for example, Demetrios' first miracle mentioned in the previous note, and *Miracles of Artemios* 32, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 45–50.

[22] According to P. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 106–17, pharmacological, prescriptive and surgical dreams had also the ill followers of Asclepius in the pre-Christian era. For the relation between dreams and ancient medicine, see also M.A. Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams. Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Lanham, MD, 2002), 151–64.

[23] The strangest medicines given by a healing saint, such as milk from a pious woman's breast or the excrement of a camel, are mostly to be found in the *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* (sixth century), ed. L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian. Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1907), 97–206, and the *Miracles of Kyros and John*, ed. Marcos, 243–400.

[24] See, for example, *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 16 and 21, ed. Deubner, 138–41, 155–6, and *Miracles of Kyros and John* 5, ed. Marcos, 249–51.

[25] In the large majority of healing dreams depicted in the miracle collection of the Virgin of the Source, both the anonymous (tenth century) and its later reworking by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (fourteenth century), ed. A. Pamperis, *Νικηφόρου Καλλίστου Ξανθοπούλου, Περὶ συστάσεως τοῦ σεβασμίου οἴκου τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ζωοδόχου Πηγῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπερφυῶς τελεσθέντων θαυμάτων* (Leipzig, 1802), the medicine suggested by the Virgin to the patients is the holy water of her monastery in Constantinople, known as Theotokos of the Source.

in the shrine.[26] There are also dreams in which the saint names the medicine, which the dreamer has to find or prepare following the saint's instructions given during the dream.[27]

The saintly voice in prescriptive dreams orders the patient to take some exercise,[28] to embark on a certain diet or to give up a habit.[29] Concerning the change of certain of the patients' habits, what the saint asks the dreamers to do or stop doing to achieve a cure varies from dreamer to dreamer. For instance, a man having an affair with a woman is ordered to end the affair,[30] another man using an abusive and blasphemous language is commanded to stop employing such a vocabulary[31] and, to give two last examples, a rich woman characterized by her vanity is asked to get rid of her bed and to sleep on the floor,[32] while a conceited man is ordered to substitute his expensive and luxurious outfit with that of a poor man, and to carry on his shoulders the water needed by the patients staying at Kyros and John's shrine.[33]

As is the case with the weird medicines suggested by the saints in pharmacological dreams, in prescriptive dreams the saints ask the patients to do strange and unexpected things to be cured.[34] For example, a disabled man sleeping in Kosmas and Damianos' shrine wishing to be granted a healing dream is ordered by the saints to go to bed with the dumb woman who happens to sleep near him. The man, who considers this a mere fantasy and not a divine dream, does not follow the saints' instructions. Eventually the same dream has to be repeated three times in order for the patient to be convinced that the saints ask him to do such a shameful thing. As soon as the patient manages to lie next to the dumb woman, she starts shouting loudly while he, full of shame, starts running. Thus both of them are healed through the fear caused to them by the man's act: afraid of what is going to happen to her, the dumb woman acquires voice while the disabled man, afraid of being ashamed, obtains healthy feet.[35]

---

[26] Wax-salve (κερωτή) is a medicine frequently used by the patients of Artemios and those of Kosmas and Damianos.

[27] See, for example, *Life and miracles of Thekla*, miracle 11, ed. Dagron, 312–14, and *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 3 and 25, ed. Deubner, 104–7 and 164–6.

[28] *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 16, ed. E. Rupprecht, *Cosmae et Damiani sanctorum medicorum vitam et miracula e codice londinensi* (Berlin, 1935), 39–40.

[29] *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 6 and 21, ed. Deubner, 110–111 and 155–7.

[30] *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 32, ed. Deubner, 177–8.

[31] *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 6, ed. Deubner, 110–111.

[32] *Miracles of Kyros and John* 24, ed. Marcos, 287–8.

[33] *Miracles of Kyros and John* 1, ed. Marcos, 243–7.

[34] Again the most unexpected prescriptions are included in both collections of the *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* (Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*; Rupprecht, *Cosmae et Damiani*), and the collection of Kyros and John's miracles (Marcos, *Los thaumata*).

[35] *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 24, ed. Deubner, 162–4. The same miracle story is also included in the miracle collection of Menas probably composed by Timothy

In the miracle collection of Kyros and John, the protagonist of a story, a doctor and sophist named Gesios, who ridicules the saints and questions their miraculous powers, gets ill, and as a result of his illness his upper body is paralysed. Unable to heal himself, he ends up in the saints' shrine. In a dream the saints ask him to play the madman: to wear a donkey's saddle, and move around the shrine in the middle of the day shouting that he is mad. Like the aforementioned invalid man from Kosmas and Damianos' collection, Gesios considers the whole thing a product of his fantasy. In a second dream, the saints not only repeat what they said in the previous one, but they also ask Gesios to wear a bell on his neck. Having difficulties to believe that this is the way he will achieve a cure, Gesios does not put into practice the saints' words. Then the saints reappear in a third dream, in which they repeat what they said in the previous ones, and they ask Gesios to wear a donkey's bridle, and to follow a servant who will be pulling him. Realizing that there is no other way to be healed, Gesios follows the saints' last orders. By accepting to be humiliated and to become a laughing stock, Gesios is granted the promised therapy through which he eventually recognizes the saints' ability to perform miracles.[36]

That Kyros and John's healing method in the case of Gesios was expected to puzzle also the contemporary audience of the text is indicated by the author's comment towards the end of this miracle story. Sophronios tries to explain the saints' healing method by mentioning that it is not only Kyros and John who perform such therapies, but also other famous healing saints, such as Kosmas and Damianos. He then draws a parallel between the story of Gesios and the aforementioned double miracle of the disabled man and the dumb woman from Kosmas and Damianos' collection, which also might have provoked surprise in the text's Byzantine audience. Sophronios justifies these saints' methods by reminding his own audience that they do not act independently. In fact, their source is Christ from whom they 'draw' all their polymorphous miracles.

Surgery dreams constitute the hagiographers' most straightforward attack against contemporary medical practice, which, according to them, cannot provide the patients with any efficient treatments. In hagiographical literature in general, and in miracle collections in particular, doctors are presented as ignorant and avaricious: they are interested in their patients' money and not in their health. Instead of curing their patients they worsen their situation, and as a result the patients have nothing else to do apart from praying for a miracle

---

the archbishop of Alexandria in the fifth century: miracle 5, ed. T.[E.] Detorakis, *Μηνᾶς ὁ μεγαλομάρτυς, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ μεγάλου κάστρου. Ἁγιολογικά-Ὑμνολογικά-Ἱστορικά* (Herakleion, 1995), 171.

[36] *Miracles of Kyros and John* 30, ed. Marcos, 302–6.

through which the saint appears as the true doctor, since he/she can cure diseases proclaimed incurable by physicians.[37]

In a surgical dream, the saint imitates a physician while performing an operation. Disguised as a doctor holding a chest of medical instruments, the healing saint appears before a patient who had previously rejected the operation suggested by physicians, assuming its deathly outcome. Despite the patient's strong reactions, the saint as doctor goes on and performs the operation, which, of course, proves successful, and the dreamer is healed.[38] Sometimes a medicine is needed for the operated person's complete cure, mostly wax-salve, provided by the saint in the same surgical dream immediately after the operation,[39] or in another dream that follows the surgical one, and belongs to the sub-category of pharmacological dreams.[40]

The length of medical dreams varies. The shortest ones, which take up a few printed lines, have a standard and simple structure similar to that of corporeal dreams. The saint appears, names a medicine, gives a prescription or performs an operation and then disappears. The saint's disappearance coincides with the end of the dream. The structure of longer dreams, on the other hand, is not standard. The longer dreams include various elements, such as descriptions of the setting, and the protagonists' appearances and behaviour, more persons, dialogues and confrontations between the saints and the dreamers.[41]

Medical dreams serve different narrative purposes depending on the type and availability of the miraculous medicine, the willingness of the patient to consume the medicine and to give up beloved habits and the type of post-surgery treatment that will lead the operated dreamer to complete convalescence. The medical dreams leading to an immediate cure, like corporeal dreams, function as narrative engines of closure. However, the medical dreams in which the saint orders the dreamer to use, for instance, a medicine he or she has difficulties finding, or to undertake actions that meet his or her strong resistance cannot lead the narrative to a closure, since such problems postpone the solution of the patient's health troubles, and the narrative has to continue.

---

[37] See also J. Duffy, 'Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries. Aspects of Teaching and Practice', *DOP* 38 (1984), 21–7; A. Kazhdan, 'The Image of the Medical Doctor in Byzantine Literature of the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries', *DOP* 38 (1984), 43–51, and H.J. Magoulias, 'The Lives of Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries', *BZ* 57 (1964), 128–33.

[38] See, for example, *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos*, 30, ed. Deubner, 173–6, and *Miracles of Artemios*, 42 and 44, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 71–4.

[39] See, for example, *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 1, ed. Deubner, 98–101.

[40] See, for example, *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos* 27, ed. Deubner, 168–70.

[41] See, for example, *Miracles of Artemios* 30 and 44, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 42–4 and 72–4; *Miracles of Kyros and John* 36 and 37, ed. Marcos, 322–33.

The unfolding of the narrative initiated by a first medical dream whose content and message the dreamer has difficulties understanding, accepting or following, as is the case of the invalid man and Gesios discussed earlier, is further assisted by more medical dreams. These additional dreams, which in most stories are two,[42] are either repetitions of the first one or different dreams, and they have always the same purpose: to convince the dreamer to undertake actions through which the narrative will proceed, so that it would eventually reach its necessary closure.

A number of medical dreams create plot twists causing suspense and surprise both to the protagonists and the audiences of the texts. A case in point is the fourth dream of the male protagonist of miracle 13 in Kosmas and Damianos' collection whose story is the following: this anonymous man has a jaw tumour from which he suffers greatly. Without losing any time, he goes to the saints' shrine where he implores them to heal him. During the same night, the saints appear to him in a dream telling him that he will get rid of his health problem if he drinks cedar oil mixed with some water. When the patient wakes up, he does not put into practice the saints' orders as he was expected, thinking that the saints would have never asked him to drink something he considers dangerous to human life. Then the saints reappear in a second dream asking him to drink two cedar oil solutions instead of one. Unable to believe that the saints want him to consume such a liquid, the dreamer remains inactive for a second time. In a third dream, the saints order him to drink three cedar oil solutions, but the man is still reluctant to do so. The next night the patient has a fourth dream in which the saints ask him why he does not follow their orders, and he answers that he is afraid to drink cedar oil. Laughing, the two saints tell the patient that if he is not willing to drink the three cedar oil solutions he could do the following: put the three solutions in a pot, go to the hippodrome in the middle of the night, and, without being seen by anyone, dig a hole where he should put the pot. If he follows their instructions, go on the saints, he will achieve a cure. At this point the dreamer's fourth and last dream ends.[43]

Here the first dream sets the story going: the saints react immediately to the patient's prayers, and offer a solution to his problem. His unwillingness to accept this solution leads to the following two dreams, whose content and structure repeat those of the first one. The only difference between the three first dreams lies in the quantity of the liquid the patient is ordered to drink which increases in each dream. The two dreams that follow the first one keep the story going, but at the same time postpone its further development, since the protagonist does

[42] All healing dreams depicted in a miracle story are mostly three – that is a sign of their truthfulness and divine origin. Moreover, number three is a frequent motif in hagiography for its function as a symbol of the Holy Trinity.

[43] *Miracles of Kosmas and Damianos*, ed. Rupprecht, 30–34.

not undertake any actions, and as a result his health problem remains unsolved. The fourth dream, which is different in size, content and structure, arrives to give another direction to the narrative, which will assist its development. Its purpose is to set in motion the inactive protagonist, and to provide the story with elements of suspense and surprise.

The saints' laughing mood and instructions in the fourth dream raise questions in the audiences' minds, who expect the saints to be angry because the patient does not listen to them, as happens in other dreams of the collection in similar situations. Additionally, the saints' willingness to change their method of therapy is not common, and, of course, the new suggested healing method seems strange: how could one's internal tumour be healed through hiding under the earth a certain amount of cedar oil solution?

The answers to these questions, accompanied by an element of surprise, come later in the narrative when the protagonist puts into practice the saints' last instructions. While he is about to put the pot with the cedar oil solution under the ground of the hippodrome he realizes that he is not alone. A considerable number of people stand around him looking at him suspiciously. Thinking that this stranger has criminal intentions, the other men start interrogating him and calling him a 'magician'. They also threaten to hand him over to the authorities if he does not reveal his real intentions. The patient tells them the story of his illness, and recounts the four dreams he had, but nobody believes him. Everybody has the same reaction he himself had after his first three dreams. They tell him that the saints would have never asked him to do such things because they are interested in human beings' benefit. They add that they will believe him if he actually drinks the content of the pot. Realizing that he has no other choice, the protagonist eventually drinks the cedar oil solution. As soon as he drinks it, he vomits and through vomit both the liquid and his disease are expelled from his body. The man's therapy coincides with the end of the narrative.

The fact that the protagonist drinks the liquid he has been rejecting from the beginning of the story surprises both himself and the text's audience, since the fourth dream has given the impression that the patient could avoid such a medicine. In fact, the fourth dream is so convincing that it creates other expectations for the protagonist and the audience. Nobody comes to the idea that the fourth dream is a trap, which will lead the protagonist to follow the saints' original order. Thus the end of the story comes as a surprise, which becomes even greater after the realization that the saints themselves played such a game on their patient.

In the last dream group, the patient's cure takes place in an allegorical way. In this case, the dreamer sees persons and events as having no apparent relation with illness and therapy. Such an example is a story from the miracle collection of St Thekla in which the patient who is the hagiographer himself is visited by the saint in a dream the night before he is about to undergo hand surgery. In

the dream, he sees himself sleeping in the yard of the saint's shrine next to a well where a group of wasps attack him. At this point the saint appears, she takes the cloth with which his body is covered, and with it she forces the wasps to go away.[44] Here the dream ends. When the author wakes up he no longer suffers from any pains, and as soon as the doctors arrive they realize full of surprise that there is no point operating on him, since he is healed. As is obvious, the wasps symbolize the hagiographer's disease, and their removal by the saint denotes its miraculous cure.

Allegorical dreams, like medical dreams, have both a simple and a more complicated structure, and they also play various narrative roles concerning the advancement of the story, its twists, closure and general attractiveness. Obviously, from a narratological point of view, medical and allegorical dreams are more interesting than bodily dreams which are, in general, short, have a simple structure and coincide with the end of the miracle story.

Miracle stories including corporeal dreams are also short, having a standard structure too, which takes the following form: they open with a presentation of the sufferer's serious health problem followed by his or her decision to seek divine assistance by going to a healing shrine. While staying in the shrine the patient is visited by the saint in a bodily dream whose content and structure have been already presented. Then the patient wakes up, finds him/herself healed, thanks both God and the miraculous saint and returns home. At this point the story closes.

Miracle stories including dreams from the other two categories, on the other hand, are longer and more sophisticated. As the story of the anonymous man with the jaw tumour has shown, there are miracle narratives containing a series of dreams, either medical or allegorical, which prolong the narrative and render its structure more complicated and interesting.

As the analysis attempted here has hopefully indicated, healing dreams are an essential feature of the Byzantine genre of miracle collection. Their purpose is to solve the protagonist's health problems, and in so doing to glorify a saint's miraculous powers. Healing dreams are independent narrative units within a larger narrative, having a beginning, middle and an end. As such, healing dreams have their own morphology, which distinguishes them from other types of dreams depicted in Byzantine hagiography. At the same time, like other dream categories, healing dreams are not isolated narrative units, but they interact with the rest of the story, which includes the following: they set the narrative going, they determine its further development, they change its direction, they postpone or hasten its closure and they contribute to its effects of suspense and surprise.

[44] *Life and miracles of Thekla*, ed. Dagron, 314–6.

Chapter 3

Ecstasy as a Form of Visionary Experience in Early Byzantine Monastic Literature

Bettina Krönung

It is a widespread belief that early Christianity was firmly opposed to visionary ecstasy. According to this view, ecstasy was not acknowledged by the official Church and was primarily associated with heretical groups, such as the Montanists, and cases of extreme asceticism in the Egyptian desert. In *Brill's New Pauly*, to cite but one example, we find the following under 'Ecstasy': 'Similarly, Christian tradition also does not know ecstasy, at least outwardly [...] The demonic interpretation of ecstasy prevents the acceptance of prophetic ecstasy, which survives only on the fringes'.[1] In this chapter, I shall argue that the negative stance on visionary ecstasy held by early Christianity is in fact far less obvious than is often stated.

It should be noted from the outset that no synodical decision or canon ever pronounced an official condemnation of ecstasy. For this reason, I shall first examine whether the patristic texts, which are usually cited in support of the hypothesis that ecstasy never received official recognition, do actually contain a clear statement regarding this point. Subsequently, I shall address the question whether the Church Fathers' texts constitute a sufficient theoretical basis to justify a strict rejection of ecstasy as spiritual practice or they rather leave space for a positive appraisal of ecstasy as divine experience. In the main part of the chapter, I present a detailed survey of ecstasy and its role in early Byzantine monastic literature, and consider the role of demonic ecstasy as well as the question of whether ecstasy was practiced as a mystical transcendent experience in 'orthodox' monasticism, thus being officially acknowledged or at least tolerated.

The chapter explores a corpus of texts consisting of the most relevant works of monastic literature from the third to the seventh century AD. It necessarily

[1] F. Graf, 'Ecstasy', in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds), *Brill's New Pauly. Antiquity Volumes* (Leiden, 2009), *Brill Online*. In the same sense also P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of Holy Man', *JRS* 61 (1971), 93, repr. in P. Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1982), 134–5; R.P. Van de Kappelle, 'Prophets and Mantics. A Response to E.R. Dodds', in R.E. Smith and J. Lounibos (eds), *Pagan and Christian Anxiety* (Lanham, 1984), 99f.; S.A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford, 2006), 24.

includes texts about holy men and women, who withdrew to secluded regions in Egypt, Palestine or Syria in order to lead a life devoted to asceticism. Composed by contemporary disciples, whose aim was to praise and glorify the holy men and women still alive or after their demise, the works are presented in a variety of literary forms that encompass Saints' Lives (*bios kai politeia*) and narratives of edification, such as the *Spiritual Meadow* and the *Lausiac History*. It also comprises texts of spiritual guidance, such as the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, and the theoretical treatises of Evagrios Pontikos and the *Ladder of Paradise*. In fact, the textual evidence is inscribed in a framework broader than that of 'hagiography', because it refers to a wide range of means in the approach of the divine.[2]

The greater part of the corpus depicts the spirituality of early Byzantine monasticism in literary form. As will be shown, it is precisely the literary nature of the texts that allows a deeper insight into the real significance of ecstasy in early Byzantine monasticism and the understanding of the often stereotypical and 'stylized' modes of narration as following patterns that attest of a specific cultural framework.[3]

It cannot be contested that the negative statements expressed in the patristic texts by Church leaders imply the rejection of ecstasy. Origen, for example, states that 'To prophesize while in a state of ecstasy and madness, with no control over oneself, this comes not from God's spirit',[4] and Basil of Caesarea claims that

> some say that they make prophesies when ecstatic and their human reason is overshadowed by the Spirit. This runs counter, however, to the prescriptions of

[2] See C. Rapp, '"For Next to God, You Are My Salvation". Reflections on the Rise of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', in J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford, 1999), 64, and more recently C. Rapp, 'The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism: Purpose and Genre between Tradition and Innovation', in C. Kelly (ed.), *Unclassical Traditions*, vol. 1: *Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2010), 119–30. The differentiation between 'holy man' and 'saint' goes back to the famous article of Brown, 'The Rise and Function'. For a compendium of the academic discourse caused by Browns article see A. Cameron, 'On Defining the Holy Man', in Howard-Johnston and Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints*, 27–43. For the sources referred to in this chapter, see the Appendix below, pp. 49–52.

[3] Such an approach to the literary manifestation of the forms of imaginative phenomena is no longer new and broadly accepted in all fields of cultural sciences: C. Walde, 'Traum', *Metzler Lexikon Religion* (2000), 530–532; A. Gerok-Reiter, 'Einleitung', in A. Gerok-Reiter and Ch. Walde (eds), *Traum und Vision in der Vormoderne. Traditionen, Diskussionen, Perspektiven* (Berlin, 2011), 8f. The term 'cultural patterns' was first used by E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), 112.

[4] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 7.3.39–41, ed. M. Borret, *Origène, Contre Celse*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1969), 20.9–11. Engl. trans. in Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 24.

> Divine Revelation: to feign being insanely possessed and, being filled with God's teachings, instantly to lose your own mind.[5]

Such assertions show an obvious apprehension about the abusive use of ecstasy by the so-called 'false prophets', who would pretend to be filled with God's spirit and imitated the external features of an ecstatic individual. In discussing Montanos, whom he accuses of being possessed by a beguiling spirit, Eusebios of Caesarea gives a definition of 'false ecstasy'. He asserts that Montanos performed ecstasy for heretical purposes, thereby reducing genuine ecstasy to a mere pseudo-ecstasy (*parekstasis*). In Eusebios' view, Montanos' way of prophesying did not comply with the tradition and legacy of the Church.[6] The example shows that Eusebios did not rejected ecstasy as such; it rather suggests that a genuine form of ecstasy existed beyond *parekstasis*.

Other texts approach ecstasy through the experience of biblical figures, such as Abraham, Moses, Paul and Peter. In the *Acts of the Apostles*, Peter sees Heaven opening up while in ecstasy,[7] and John Chrysostom interprets the experience as follows: 'Ecstasy is a spiritual revelation allowing the soul to transcend the body'.[8] Prokopios of Gaza adopts a similar tone when writing that 'Ecstasy lets one rise above bodily perception in accordance with divine judgment. An ecstasy fell on Abraham to enable him to receive a revelation'.[9] Elsewhere, Prokopios elaborates on the nature of prophetic ecstasy. Like Basil, he believes that a prophet's intellect filled with the spirit of God does not cause loss of consciousness as it does with *ekstasis dianoias*. He further glosses on this argument by claiming that it is impossible for the spirit of wisdom to fill the prophet with ignorance.[10] Loss of consciousness was in fact an essential criterion upon which ecstasy was assessed as positive or negative.

The theoretical distinction between the positive, mystical ecstasy and the negative ecstasy, which is due to frenzy, occurs for the first time in the works of the Church Fathers.[11] While the depiction of mystical ecstasy they provide is based on the biblical prophets, the features of 'ecstasy due to frenzy' are drawn from the Dionysian ecstasy, known from Euripides (*ekstasis frenōn*), but also from the Platonic thought, according to which the *enthousiasmos* takes the philosopher – possessed by Eros and considered insane by the onlookers – into

---

[5] Basil of Caesarea, *Ennaratio in prophetam Isaiam*, Praef. 5.1–6, ed. P. Trevisan, *San Basilio. Commento al Profeta Isaia*, vol. 1 (Turin, 1939); Eng. trans. in Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 24.

[6] Eusebios of Caesarea, *Church History*, 5.16.7.2–9, ed. G. Bardy, *Eusèbe de Cesarée, Histoire Ecclésiastique*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1952), 47.24–48.6.

[7] Acts 10:10.

[8] John Chrysostom, *In Acta apostolorum*, *PG* 60, 172.43–5.

[9] Prokopios of Gaza, *Commentarii in Genesin*, *PG* 87.1, 173B.

[10] Prokopios of Gaza, *Commentarii in Isaïam*, *PG* 87.2, 1817A.

[11] See also A. K[azhdan], 'Ecstasy', *ODB* 1, 675.

a state of divine frenzy (*theia mania*) that leads the philosopher to an ecstatic vision of the ideas, that is the divine.[12] Therefore, Dionysian frenzy and mystical vision are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually dependent.[13]

Many monastic texts adopt the Church Fathers' criterion of expanding/losing consciousness as a means to distinguish between genuine mystical ecstasy *(ekstasis*) and false Dionysian ecstasy, the latter described as a state of madness and designated by the terms *ekstasis frenōn*, but also *ekstasis*.[14] However, unlike the Church Fathers, the monastic authors do not associate Dionysian ecstasy with the pseudo-ecstasy of false prophets; they rather interpret it as 'illness', which is usually the result of some sort of demonic obsession. Its symptoms are described as stronger than those of mystical ecstasy and include 'screaming', 'falling to the ground or into the water', 'stiffening of the body', 'foaming' and similar. In some cases, the effect is so strong that it caused the death of the visionary.[15] 'Straying from the path of salvation' is often cited as the cause for this destructive type of ecstasy. The *Life of Pachomios* explains that 'normal' cenobitic monks are most prone to 'lethal' ecstasy 'because if they believe to be something which they are not, the enemy will seduce them into wishing to see, and if they are corrupted, they will fall into an ecstasy (*empesai en ekstasei*), like so many'.[16] Similarly, Evagrios utters the following warning: 'Arrogance is followed by rage and sorrow and finally the worst evil of all, madness (*ekstasis frenōn*), frenzy and the beholding of a mass of demons in the air',[17] and in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Anthony the Great reports that he 'knew monks who, despite hard ascetic efforts, fell and went mad (*eis ekstasin elthontas*)'.[18]

The texts exemplify these warnings with various accounts of demonic ecstasy. In the *Life of Pachomios*, for example, we are told of a brother:

> [He] was drawn into an ecstasy (*katerragē en ekstasei*) by the demon of lust so that he lay on the ground as dead. When, after several days, he had recovered slightly,

---

[12] See F. Pfister, 'Ekstase', *RAC* 4, 974–80.

[13] Plato's philosophy also accounts for the strong inclination towards ecstatic experiences among Neoplatonists. The most famous example is Plotinus, see Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 286; E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in Age of Anxiety* (New York, 1970), 84–91; J. Halfwassen, *Plotin und der Neuplatonismus* (München, 2004), 49–58; K. Alt, *Plotin* (Stuttgart, 2005), 9f., 29–31, 118–24.

[14] See Appendix below, pp. 49–52.

[15] Marc the Deacon, *Life of Porphyrios of Gaza*, 90.1–9, ed. H. Grégoire and M.-A. Kugener, *Marc le Diacre, Vie de Porphyre* (Paris, 1930), 70.7–15. See also below, n. 18.

[16] See *Life of Pachomios*, 135.11, ed. F. Halkin, *Le corpus athénien de saint Pachôme* (Geneva, 1982), 64.23.

[17] Evagrios, *Praktike*, 14.5–7, ed. A. and C. Guillaumont, Évagre le Pontique, Traité pratique ou Le Moine, vol. 1 (Paris, 1971), 534.1–3.

[18] *Sayings of the desert fathers* (Alphabetical Collection), *PG* 65, 88B.

> he went to the brothers and told them, crying and shaking, that he himself was the cause of his downfall [...] And while he was still speaking, he was seized by the demon with such force as if he was outside himself. He ran a long way up the mountain and came into a town. Here, after some time, he who was outside himself (*ekstatikos ōn*) threw himself into the oven of the bath and burned to death.[19]

In monastic texts the account of demonic ecstasy is modelled on the story of the lunatic boy as recorded in the Gospels;[20] however, the authors rarely designate it with the verb 'to be lunatic' (*selēniazetai*).[21] Instead, they regularly use the term *ekstasis* that has an exclusively positive sense in the New Testament, which ignores the term *ekstasis* (*frenōn*) with a negative connotation, probably because it specifically designated visionary experiences caused by the demons.[22] Yet, both expressions clearly describe symptoms of epilepsy and can thus be considered as synonymous. Already in Antiquity, the physiological phenomenon of epilepsy – then known as *hiera nosos* – was seen to be caused by the phases of the moon and was therefore termed 'lunacy'.[23] The association of lunacy (*selēniasmos*) with the demonic obsession is for the first time registered in the New Testament and was then conveyed into early Christianity, in particular through the exegesis of Origen,[24] for whom the illness was in reality caused by demons rather than by the moon, as believed by the majority. Origen's view echoes the critical stance of the official Church against astrology, but the sparse use of the term *selēniasmos* in the monastic texts indicates that the change of thought in early Christianity went in fact beyond Origen's new demonic interpretation of lunacy. Furthermore, the substitution of *ekstasis* (*frenōn*) for *selēniasmos* suggests a Christian approach to

---

[19] *Life of Pachomios*, 8.14–21, ed. Halkin, 14.30–15.6.

[20] According to Mark 9:17f., the boy is taken to Jesus by his father because he was suffering from seizures by an evil spirit ever since his infancy. The seizures were accompanied by foaming at the mouth, gnashing of teeth and finally becoming rigid. An abridged version of the story is also found in the Gospel of Matthew 17:15, where the boy's father says to Jesus: 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic (σεληνιάζεται) and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire and into the water'. The account in Matthew's Gospel is an abridged version of Mark's, where – as in Luke 9:37–43 – the term σεληνιάζεται is not used, but the symptoms of epilepsy are described in detail: cf. G. Makris, 'Zur Epilepsie in Byzanz', *BZ* 88 (1995), 365.

[21] See Appendix below, pp. 50–51.

[22] Only Theodoret of Cyrrhus uses the classic word λύττη/λυττάω; see Appendix below, p. 51.

[23] See Makris, 'Zur Epilepsie', 365; O. Temkin, *The Falling Sickness. A History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology* (2nd edn; Baltimore, 1994), 95.

[24] See F.J. Dölger, 'Der Einfluss des Origenes auf die Beurteilung der Epilepsie und Mondsucht im christlichen Altertum', *Antike und Christentum* 4 (1934), 95–8; A.-J. Festugière, *Les moines d'Orient*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1960), 25; Makris, 'Zur Epilepsie', 394 n. 142; Temkin, *The Falling Sickness*, 91f.

the Dionysian ecstasy viewed as demonic madness whose external appearance was almost identical to epilepsy. Still, as I shall show below, because the term *ekstasis* also applied to the experience of mystical ecstasy several authors were reluctant to give a specific name to the demonic obsession; they preferred to allude to it by describing the symptoms of epilepsy.[25]

As already mentioned, the Church Fathers refer to ecstatic experiences of divine origin exclusively in connection with holy biblical persons; they did not consider whether ecstasy was also an orthodox form of transcendent experience practiced by their contemporaries. Nevertheless, monastic literature includes many narratives, which show that mystical ecstasy was an important form of transcendent experience in orthodox Christianity. Such an attitude does not necessarily imply a contradiction between patristic theory and monastic practice; it rather suggests that the concept of mystical ecstasy, as experienced by the biblical prophets, was integrated into the spirituality of orthodox monasticism and practiced as an important means for receiving divine revelations. At this point, it should be noted that visionary accounts have an important rhetoric function, especially in edifying literature and Saints' Lives. By employing visionary accounts as a narrative framework, these texts follow the rich tradition of the 'imaginative spirituality' expressed by the late antique literature, which presents a strong tendency to illustrate abstract ideas through allegorical visionary revelations – images easy to understand.[26] Early Byzantine

[25] See below: Appendix, p. 51. Only John Klimax explicitly mentions epilepsy (ἐπιληψία); hovewer, he does not establish any connection to demonic obsession: John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, *PG* 88, 698B, 796C. See Makris, 'Zur Epilepsie', 296, n. 154.

[26] Here, the stories of the Old Testament, the Book of Revelation, the apocryphal gospels, the Apocalypses of Peter and Paul, the apocryphal acts, the works of Enoch, the Shepherd of Hermas, the early Acts of the Martyrs (especially the Passion of Perpetua) as well as the Late Antique novels are of particular importance. See R. Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1932), 171–80; F. Weinstock, 'De somniorum visionumque in amatoriis graecorum fabulis vi atque usus', *Eos* 35 (1934), 29–72; Dodds, *Pagan and Christian*, 47–53; M. Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys. A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature* (Frankfurt, 1984), 262–88; K. Berger, 'Visionsberichte. Formgeschichtliche Bemerkungen über pagane hellenistische Texte und ihre frühchristlichen Analogien', in K. Berger (ed.), *Studien und Texte zur Formgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1992), 207–9. See also S.N. Philippides, 'Η αφηγηματική αιτιολόγηση των ονείρων στα αρχαία ελληνικά μυθιστορήματα', D.I. Kyrtatas, 'Τα όνειρα της ερήμου. Πειρασμοί και εσχατολογικές προσδοκίες των πρώτων χριστιανών ασκητών', and C. Angelidi, 'Όνειρα και οράματα του προφήτη Ερμά', in D.I. Kyrtatas (ed.), *Όψις ἐνυπνίου. Η χρήση των ονείρων στην ελληνική και ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα* (Herakleion, 1993), 155–76, 212–25, 276; P. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, 1994), 131–83; S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides. The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London and New York, 1996), 1–18; B. Näf, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum* (Darmstadt, 2004), 134–6.

monastic texts in particular convey by this means abstract theological teachings of Christian doctrine and orthodox dogma.[27] Nevertheless, as will be shown, the frequent use of these literary strategies reflects the importance of visionary experiences in real-life monastic spirituality as well as in pious Christianity.

The ambivalence pertaining to the use of the term 'ecstasy' in the accounts of mystical experiences is not an exclusive feature of the corpus. It denotes a widespread stance concerning the pursuit of such experiences, which comprises specific practices that aim to evoke a condition of rapture, and is due to the twofold nature of any divine relation: the coexistence of an active, self-induced element and a passive, spontaneous one.[28] Indeed, monastic authors often underline that no revelation can be brought about by human will alone, but that the vision is a divine act of grace, which occurs 'spontaneously'. Cyril of Skythopolis, for example, claims that 'if Lord decides to reveal something to his saints, they are prophets. But if He wants to conceal it, they see no more than any other man'.[29] On the other hand, the texts clearly show that inducing visionary experiences through ascetic practice was a legitimate way to establish contact with the divine sphere. Arsenios' saying 'if we search for God, He will appear before us' illustrates well this point.[30]

In what way, then, did the holy men endeavour to generate divine visions? How did they reach the state of ecstasy that enabled them to receive revelations? The essential prerequisite for inducing trance was 'looking inward', which involved perceiving the powers of the Spirit with the eyes of the soul while drifting into meditation.[31] This kind of mystical contemplation aimed at achieving a state of visionary experience in which the gaze of the inner eye was riveted on the invisible instead of the visible, on the heavenly realm instead of the earthly life. Contemplation was thought to expand the consciousness and allow the ascetic to break the barrier set between the earthly self and God, and to gain, at least temporarily, access to the heavenly realm. The most intense form

---

[27] See also H. Delehaye, *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique* (Brussels, 1981), 117–46; A. Kazhdan and H. Maguire, 'Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art', *DOP* 45 (1991), 11–18; P. Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World. The First Nine Centuries A.D.* (Florence, 2003), 21–2.

[28] See E. Benz, *Die Vision. Erfahrungsformen und Bildwelt* (Stuttgart, 1969), 37.

[29] Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast*, 5.20, ed. E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939), 205.10–12.

[30] *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Systematic Collection), 11.5, ed. J.-C. Guy, *Les Apophtegmes des Pères. Collection systématique*, vol. 2 (Paris, 2003), 138.11f.

[31] See for example John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, 809: 'Blessed is the monk who is able to concentrate on spiritual powers with the eyes of the soul'. For further examples, see B. Krönung, 'Ekstasen und andere Formen von Visionserfahrungen in der frühbyzantinischen monastischen Literatur', in Gerok-Reiter and Walde (eds), *Traum und Vision* (as above, n. 3), 73, n. 31.

of this religious trance is ecstasy, and it is the only one to which the specific term *ekstasis* is applied in Byzantine literature.[32] Early Byzantine monasticism was aware of several techniques, which were fundamental components of the 'angelic life' (*angelikos bios*),[33] and the texts frequently mention prayer ([*pros*]*euchē*),[34] chanting of psalms and hymns (*psallein*),[35] fasting (*nēsteia*) and continence (*egkrateia*)[36] in connection with ecstatic experiences. The techniques also included the 'sitting' method (*kathezesthai*),[37] for which current ethno-religious and medical studies have shown that it may induce trance, whether religious or non-religious.[38] Closely related to the 'sitting', other techniques are mentioned in the sources, such as 'rest' (*hēsychazein*),[39] 'fixed gaze' (*atenizein*)[40] and 'keeping awake' (*agrypnein*).[41] Mystical ecstasy could also be induced by other, less intentional factors, such as physical exhaustion or illness.[42] However, by contrast to Latin writings of the Middle Ages on the issue,[43] early Byzantine

[32] Entering a state of ecstasy is frequently described with phrases such as 'and then I/he went into ecstasy and I/he saw [...]' (for example John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, 2964A–B); 'I was snatched away / guided downward / uplifted / guided by the spirit' (for example *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 10.20, ed. A.-J. Festugière [Brussels, 1961], 84.1f.); 'to be beside oneself / to go into ecstasy' (for example Palladios, *Lausiac History*, 1.18–21, ed. C. Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius. A Critical Discussion Together with Notes on Early Egyptian Monachism*, vol. 2 [Cambridge, 1904; repr. Hildesheim, 1967], 15.22–25), or, more generally, 'he saw it in ecstasy / it came to him in ecstasy' (for example *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*, 57.28, ed. P. Van den Ven, *La Vie ancienne de s. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, vol. 1 [Brussels, 1962], 51.11).

[33] On the components of ἀγγελικὸς βίος mentioned below, see K.S. Frank, Ἀγγελικὸς βίος. Begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum 'engelgleichen Leben' im frühen Mönchtum (Frankfurt, 1964), 18–114.

[34] For example Palladios, *Lausiac History*, 21, ed. Butler, 69.4–15.

[35] For example Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatios*, 61.2–4, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Vie d'Hypatios* (Paris, 1971), 286.22–288.5.

[36] For example *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 21.6.2, ed. Festugière, 125.7.

[37] For example *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Alphabetical Collection), *PG* 65, 428D. See also, F. Dodel, *Das Sitzen der Wüstenväter: Eine Untersuchung anhand der Apophthegmata Patrum* (Freiburg, 1997), 73.

[38] F. Goodman, *Trance – der uralte Weg zum religiösen Erleben. Rituelle Körperhaltungen und ekstatische Erlebnisse* (Gütersloh, 1992), 11–24.

[39] For example Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of Euthymios*, 19.10–12, ed. Schwartz, 30.9–10.

[40] For example *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*, 66.22–25, ed. Van der Ven, 58.1–4.

[41] For example Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast*, 9.10–12, ed. Schwartz, 208.10–12.

[42] For example John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, 428D, or Marc the Deacon, *Life of Porphyrios of Gaza*, 7.8–13, ed. Grégoire and Kugener, 7.8–13.

[43] P. Dinzelbacher, 'Körperliche und seelische Vorbedingungen religiöser Träume und Visionen', in T. Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo* (Rome, 1985), 71.

literature contains only few such cases; ecstasy generally occurred after the subject had himself properly 'prepared' for it.

It is noteworthy that the 'symptoms' of mystical ecstasy described in the texts indicate not only limited sensory perception, which is typical of a mild meditative trance, but the much more intense state of 'complete loss of external physical awareness and catalepsy'[44] that resembles to sleep. In this regard, a passage from the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, in which the physiological aspect of the ecstatic subject is likened to the aspect of a sleeping person, is particularly eloquent:

> He spent thirteen days without food, in silence and without seeing anyone; he appeared in deep sleep and only his respiration was left to him. The monks and the local people were lamenting because they thought he already had left the earthly life and they would never again be granted to see him alive. In reality, he was moving around the heavenly world enjoying its sight [...] After the thirteen days were over, he suddenly returned from this desperate condition and awoke from sleep as he usually did.[45]

The description – among other similar ones – stresses the symptomatic similarity between sleep and ecstasy. It also shows that the author was conscious of the fact that he was confronted with two different states of mind. In this, he follows Prokopios of Gaza's writing on the difficult Genesis verse 'And the Lord God caused an ecstasy to fall upon Adam, and he slept',[46] which he interpreted thus:

> He 'slept' does not signify common sleep [...] but the nature of the ecstasy. For when the prophets received such revelations, they were often awake, and the divine power made them see what He wanted to reveal to them as if they were dreaming.[47]

In many cases, ecstasy is not reported as a brief 'seizure', but rather as a state that could last for a longer period of time.[48] The subject usually found him/herself in some kind of contemplation, often accompanied by heightened emotion, and the feelings produced by the experience – fear, terror, joy, or sadness – were expressed through physical responses such as groaning, crying, trembling or constant repetition of a single phrase.[49] The authors often describe what was seen

---

[44] P. Dinzelbacher, *Revelationes* (Turnhout, 1991), 17.

[45] *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 162.15–21, ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1970), 146.13–19.

[46] Genesis 2:21.

[47] Prokopios of Gaza, *In Genesin*, *PG* 87.1, 173.

[48] For example *Life of Pachomios*, 71.2–8, ed. Halkin, 37.12–18; see also above, n. 45.

[49] For example *Life of Anthony*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine* (Paris, 2000), 344.16–345.4.

and felt during the mystical experience from the perspective of the ascetic or the holy man. The subject is thus depicted as if he was observing his/her self from the outside, watching the actions of another person, a typical phenomenon registered in connection with trance conditions and termed by anthropologists of religion as 'feeling of dissociation'.[50] This type of experience is in particular recorded with reference to the prophetic visions of Symeon Stylite the Younger and his mother Martha. Expressions such as 'he/I was removed in spirit and saw himself/myself' or 'he saw himself in the power of the spirit' are recurrent in the text.[51] They suggest that the mind has left the body and is now watching it from the outside. In the *Life of Anthony the Great*, Athanasios gives an impressive description of the saint's experience:

> He felt as if he was carried away in spirit [...] The strange thing was that he stood there and saw himself leaving his self and being led into the air [... then] he suddenly saw himself as if he had come back and was now standing next to his self, and then he was completely Anthony again.[52]

The examples discussed so far concern cases of mystical ecstasy *stricto sensu*: either ecstasy is explicitly termed as such or the described symptoms clearly designate it.[53] In an important number of such reports, reference to visual and even audiovisual revelations is a recurrent trait. In several instances the account relates to how the ecstatic subject travels to Heaven or other sacred places, often guided by an angel or a saint;[54] then, what he actually saw during his

[50] F.M. Welte, 'Trance', in C. Auffarth (ed.), *Metzler-Lexikon Religion*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 2000), 521–2.

[51] *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*, 71.4f., 104.4–9, 106.8–10, 160.16f., 187.1, ed. Van den Ven, 61.3f., 81.27–82.3, 86.6–8, 142.15f., 165.4. Another example in John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, 812C.

[52] *Life of Anthony*, 65.2–6, ed. Bartelink, 304.7–306.7.

[53] See the examples in the Appendix below, pp. 49–52.

[54] Unlike numerous texts by late antique theologians, the monastic texts do not contain theoretical discussions on the separation of the soul from the body in ecstasy. However, passages like those found in the *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger* (as above, n. 51) and the *Life of Anthony* (as above, n. 52) do suggest that the authors in fact assumed such a separation. A clear hint is presented in Cyril of Skythopolis' *Life of John the Hesychast*, 17.2, ed. Schwartz, 214.22: 'St John desired to behold the soul separating from the body. As he was asking God to grant him this wish, he was carried away in spirit to Bethlehem and saw [...]'. This corresponds to the statement by John Chrysostom mentioned above (see n. 8). Similarly, Athanasios of Alexandria, author of the *Life of Anthony*, 'imagined the dreaming soul as a rational and immortal traveler': *Contra Gentes* 31.38–44, ed. R. Thomson, *Athanasius, 'Contra Gentes' and 'De Incarnatione* (Oxford, 1971); cf. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 66, and 39–73 on the late antique discussion of the relationship between the soul and the body while dreaming.

journey is presented with varying degrees of detail and literary ornamentation. Nevertheless, other accounts do not mention the subject's stepping beside himself or being taken to another place and allusively state that someone saw something in ecstasy.[55] Often the term 'vision' (*horama*, *horasis*, *optasia*) is employed to denote what the subject saw in ecstasy.[56] The use indicates that the authors distinguish between two different conditions: ecstasy refers to a precise state of consciousness (and body attitude), while 'vision' expresses the visual content and, more importantly, the revelatory origin and essence of what is seen. Unlike the deceitful images created by demons (*phantasia*), a vision is always a divine revelation, which can be received in any state of consciousness, be it in ecstasy, while sleeping or awake.

A passage from the *Historia Monachorum* that relates the story of an ascetic 'who settled in the desert and did many good works over a long time' illustrates this well:

> He loved the tranquillity and spent his days with prayers, hymns and many contemplations, and saw divine visions (*horaseis theioteras*), both while he was awake (*egrēgorōs*) and while he was sleeping (*kath' hypnous*).[57]

Besides the unambiguous cases of ecstasy already discussed, the corpus contains a considerable number of visionary accounts, which do not give any information as to whether the experience took place while the subject was awake or sleeping, in ecstasy or in any other trance-like state of mind. In such cases, the act of entering the visionary experience is described by expressions such as 'he/I saw in a vision' (*en horamati*/*en horasei*).[58] The lack of any secure marker for distinguishing these visions from the genuine ecstatic visions leaves unclear the nature of the event; it is equally plausible to understand a vision during sleep or a dream, as it occurs in accounts that depict a visionary having a vision while he is asleep or which designate a dream as vision.[59] It is noteworthy, however, that specific dream terms – such as *oneiros*, *onar*, *enypnion*[60] – are often avoided in favour of phrases such as 'he saw in his sleep/it appeared in his sleep'.[61]

---

55 For example *Life of Pachomios*, 71.2, ed. Halkin, 37.13.

56 For example *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 21.1; 22.23, ed. H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites* (Brussels, 1923; repr. 1989), 21.18, and 24.8.

57 *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 1.45. ed. Festugière, 26.11–27.5.

58 For example *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 58.23–24, ed. Festugière, vol. 1, 49.31–2.

59 For example John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, 3012C.

60 On the interchangeability of these terms in monastic literature, see Krönung, 'Ekstasen', 78f., 88–90.

61 These phrases are known from the Septuagint: Numbers 12:6–8. 1; Kings 3:4f. See John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, 2885D-2887A.

This attitude seems to reflect the widespread negative judgment of dreams in both the New Testament and the entire early Christian literature.[62]

Although monastic literature does not explicitly reject dreams, it never interprets them as positive or meaningful unless they serve as a revelatory medium of God. There is not a single case of divinatory dream.[63] Rather, almost all dream images considered not to be sent by God were regarded as deceptions by demons (*phantasia*), attracted by the vulnerability of the sleeper and 'entering' into his sleep to 'attack' him.[64] The negative assessment of dreams is accompanied by a firm disapproval of sleep, which conforms to the spirituality of early Byzantine monasticism. Spending the entire night without sleep in prayer and meditation was considered as an essential exercise improving the subject's concentration on the perception of God.[65] The great importance given to staying awake provides an explanation for many accounts of visions received at night, which mention neither dream nor sleep, and are introduced by phrases such as 'it appeared to him during the night', 'he saw in a vision during the night', 'it showed itself before me during the night' and so on.[66] It is possible to assume that nightly visions do not represent dreams, but revelations that occurred during the night while the subject stayed awake,[67] in

[62] See J. Le Goff, 'Le christianisme et les rêves (IIe–VIIe siècles)', in Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo*, 172; Berger, 'Visionsberichte', 204; M. Frenschkowski, 'Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium', *JbAC* 41 (1998), 9; Angelidi, 'Όνειρα και οράματα', in Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου*, 216.

[63] In Byzantium, the interpretation of dreams was repeatedly prohibited both by the emperor and the church. See G.T. Calofonos, 'Dream Interpretation: A Byzantinist Superstition?', *BMGS* 9 (1984–85), 217; G. Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi: Le rêve et son intérpretation d'après les sources byzantines', in Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo*, 39; M.T. Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager. Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt 1993), 21; G. Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (Stuttgart, 2000), 112; M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Graeco-Roman World* (London and New York, 2001), 254, 262–72.

[64] On the few examples of dreams declared as originated in physiological procedures see Krönung, 'Ekstasen', 79 n. 67.

[65] See above, n. 39, 40, 41.

[66] For example Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of Euthymios*, 41.8f., ed. Schwartz, 61.11f.; *Life of Martha*, 16.1, ed. P. van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le jeune*, vol. 2 (Brussels, 1970), 265.1; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Religious History*, 13.17.7f., ed. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, *Théodoret de Cyr, Histoire des moines de Syrie. Histoire Philothée I–XIII* (Paris, 1977), 504.10f. Cf. Acts 16:9; 18:9; 23:11; 27:23; see also Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast* 5.1f., ed. Schwartz, 204.15f. For further examples, see B. Krönung, *Träume, Visionen und andere imaginäre Erfahrungen* (forthcoming), chap. 2: 'Bewusstseinszustände und imaginäre Erfahrungen'.

[67] As in Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast*, 9.10–12, ed. Schwartz, 208.10–12.

prayers or singing psalms.[68] It would seem that, while performing these acts, the visionaries were in a state of expanded consciousness, perhaps in a mild trance or even in ecstasy. The same applies to all other visions for which we are not given any information as to the visionary's state of consciousness; most likely they also were experiences of trance or ecstasy rather than dreams.

The monastic texts thus express the view that receiving visions is not necessarily bound to any specific state of consciousness. As already mentioned, divine revelations require an act of divine grace. It is always God's will and grace that determines who is chosen to receive a vision and when this happens. Still, the texts make it clear that all forms of ascetic effort aim at perceiving the divine, thereby constituting a prerequisite for the state of expanded consciousness in which visionary experiences are most likely to occur. The main aim of inducing visions is contained in the term 'vision' (*horama*, *optasia*, *horasis*) itself, which involves the sight of God, the visualization of transcendent matters.

This attitude is not to be seen in contradiction to the repeatedly mentioned *theologoumenon* 'God is invisible' (*aoratos*),[69] according to which it was firmly believed that God reveals himself to humans in an unencrypted form only after their demise.[70] It rather implies the belief that, during earthly life, He appears to humans only in indirect revelations, through messengers (angels and saints) or the manifold signs of His doings. Interestingly enough, even the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, which have been labelled as Iconoclastic if compared to hagiographic literature,[71] contain a set of colourful allegorical visions.[72] The work of Evagrios Pontikos is the only exception on the long list of ascetic literature that lacks any account of ecstatic or visionary experience,[73] although

[68] As in the *Life of Pachomios*, 88.10, ed. Halkin, 44.8.

[69] This attribute of God is found repeatedly in the corpus, for example the *Life of Pachomios*, 22.6, 48.4, 93.28, ed. Halkin, 17.17, 28.22; John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, 812C; *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*, 124.32f. (τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα); 196.21, ed. Van den Ven, 107.8f; *Life of Martha*, 42.3, ed. Van den Ven, 284.27. On the history of this term in biblical literature and the writings of the apostolic fathers, see W. Michaelis, 'ὁρατός, ἀόρατος', in *Theologisches Wörterbuch Neues Testament*, vol. 7 (1954), 369–71.

[70] There is only one instance in which θεοφανεία is used in a general fashion, see Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast*, 9.15, ed. Schwartz, 208.15.

[71] See Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi', 47.

[72] See Appendix. For further examples of allegorical visions, see *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Systematic Collection), 5.43, 6.25, 7.1, 9.5, 9.6, 9.14, 9.24, 11.9, 13.17, 15.33, 15.91, 16.27, 18.3, ed. Guy, *Apophtegmes*, vol. 1 (1993), 288.1–14, 330.1–332.20, 336.4–11, 428.4–13, 430.4–15, 438.11–17, 446.19–23, *Apophtegmes*, vol. 2 (2003), 140.1–5, 248.10–18, 300.1–11, 344.4-8, 410.6–11, and *Apophtegmes*, vol. 3 (2005), 38.13–40.25. *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Alphabetical Collection), *PG* 65, 76, 121A, 156, 168, 216, 217, 276, 377C, 404A.

[73] The *Religious History* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and the works of Leontios of Neapolis also lack examples of mystical ecstasy, but they do contain several allegorical

it had an important impact on the formation of the Egyptian and Byzantine monastic spirituality. In the ascetic instructions he authored, Evagrios expresses cautions against mental imagery, whether it occurs in the subject's dreams while sleeping or in his thoughts while being awake (*logismoi*). Moreover, he considers images to be the work of demons that endeavour to lead the monk away from the path of salvation and describes ecstasy as a 'propensity of the rational soul for the evil'.[74] This attitude supported the main objective of the asceticism he advanced – the purely intellectual understanding of God (*pneumatikē theōria*).[75]

However, because all other monastic texts or treatises include transcendent subject matter by narrating visionary experiences, it is obvious that early Byzantine monasticism was striving for an interaction of sensory perception and transcendence. In fact, it is the indirect, allegorical perception of the divine, which prevented early Byzantine visionaries from the suspicion of heresy. And it is the very same belief in the strong relation of the senses with the intellect, which enabled the integration of the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite and, later, of Maximos Confessor into Byzantine orthodoxy.[76] In the process of attaining the highest degree of spirituality, mystical ecstasy was the necessary link between perception and experience of the divine; it was, therefore, far from being rejected.

---

visions: Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Religious History*, 21.17; 21.20; 21.22; 26.19, ed. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, *Histoire des moines de Syrie II. Histoire philothée XIV–XXIII* (Paris, 1979), 96.17–98.8, 102.9–104.4, 104.17–106.2, 198.24–200.1, 200.11–19. Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of Symeon Salos*, 1677D, ed. A.-J. Festugière and L. Rydén, *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le Fou; Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974), 60.21–6; Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of John of Cyprus*, 6.50–76, 23.20–35, 25.47–60, 32.5–15, 52.35–45, 60.1–21, ed. Festugière and Rydén, 351.26–352.10, 373.16–28, 377.19–28, 382.17-25, 403.7–16, 408.3–17.

[74] Evagrios, *Capitula xxxiii*, *PG* 40, 1265.21–3.

[75] See F. Refoulé, 'Rêves et vie spirituelle d'après Évagre le Pontique', in *Supplément de la vie spirituelle* 59 (1961), 470–516; A. Guillaumont, 'Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique', *RHR* 181 (1972), 29–56; A. Guillaumont, 'La vision de l'intellect par lui-même dans la mystique évagrienne', in *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 50 (Beyrouth, 1984), 255–62; A. Bravo García, 'Sueño y ensueño en la literatura ascético-mística del siglo IV: Evagrio Póntico', in M. Morfakidis (ed.), *La religión en el mundo griego* (Granada, 1997), 185–90.

[76] See Krönung, 'Ekstasen', 68 n. 12, and 82 n. 86.

Appendix

Ecstasy in Early Monastic Literature : Terminology

	Demonic Ecstasy				Mystic Ecstasy	
Work	ἔκστασις	ἔκστασις φρενῶν	σεληνιασμός/λύττη	-	ἔκστασις	-
Evagrios Pontikos, *Praktike*, ed. A. and C. Guillaumont (Paris, 1971); *Gnostikos*, ed. A. and C. Guillaumont (Paris, 1989); *Ad monachos*, ed. J. Driscoll (Rome, 1991); *De oratione*, *PG* 79, 1165–1200; *De malignis cogitationibus*, ed. A. and C. Guillaumont (Paris, 1998); *Capitula xxxiii*, *PG* 40, 1857–66	*De malignis cogitationibus* 23.4 = ed. Guillaumont, 232.7; *Capitula xxxiii*, *PG* 40, 1865.21–3	*Praktike*: 14.5–7 = ed. Guillaumont 534.1–3				
Sayings of the desert fathers: *Alphabetical Collection*, *PG* 65, 71–440; *Systematic Collection,* ed. J.-C. Guy (Paris, 1993–2005)	*Syst.*: 3.39.4 = ed. Guy (1993) 172.17	*Alph.*: *PG* 65, 88B			*Alph.*: *PG* 65, 208D, 357B, 408C, 409A, 428D; *Syst.*: 3.31.2, 3.33.2, 3.38.8, 7.52.24, 9.16.9, 18.10.2, 18.27.2 = ed. Guy (1993), 166.10, 166.22, 170.22, 384.8, 440.4; ed. Guy (2005), 50.18, 80.20	*Alph.: PG* 65, 100D; *Syst.*: 11.9.1–5 = ed. Guy (2003), 140.1–5

	Demonic Ecstasy				Mystic Ecstasy	
Work	ἔκστασις	ἔκστασις φρενῶν	σεληνιασμός/λύττη	-	ἔκστασις	-
Dialogus de contemplatione, ed. J.-C. Guy, *Recherches de science religieuse* 50 (1962), 232–6		5.2 = ed. Guy, 233.2				
Historia Monachorum in Aegypto, ed. A.-J. Festugière, (Brussels, 1961)	9.11 = ed. Festugière, 74.17					10.20–22, 21.5–10 = ed. Festugière, 84.1–12, 125.8–126.8
Palladios, *Lausiac History*, ed. C. Butler (Hildesheim, 1967)	18.26, 39.4 = ed. Butler, 48.22, 123.7				1.20, 4.27, 29.26, 38.54 = ed. Butler, 15.24, 20 line 7, 85.14, 119.6	
Athanasios of Alexandria, *Life of Anthony*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (Paris, 1994)					82.4 = ed. Bartelink, 346.1	65.2 = ed. Bartelink, 304.9
Life of Pachomios, ed. F. Halkin (Geneva, 1982)	8.14, 96.11, 135.11 = ed. Halkin, 14.32, 47.25, 64.23				71.2 = ed. Halkin, 37.13	
Epistula Ammonis Episcopi, de SS Pachomio et Theodoro, ed. F. Halkin, (Brussels, 1932), 98–121					12.7 = ed. Halkin, 103.12	
Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatios*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (Paris, 1971)			44.40.1 = ed. Bartelink, 268.25		51.2.1 = ed. Bartelink, 286. 22	

	Demonic Ecstasy				Mystic Ecstasy	
Work	ἔκστασις	ἔκστασις φρενῶν	σεληνιασμός/λύττη		ἔκστασις	
Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Religious History*, ed. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen (Paris, 1977–79)			λυττάω *and* λύττη: 3.9.14, 6.6.4, 8.12.12, 9.10.21, 21.23.14, 21.24.1, 22.4.6, 28.1.17 = ed. Canivet (1977), 260.10, 354.9, 398.14, 426.15, and Canivet (1979), 106.16, 106.18, 128.13, 226.1			
John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, *PG* 87/3, 2851–3112					*PG* 87.3, 2864A, 2865C, 2900A, 2916C, 2917A, 2964A, 2992D–2993A, 2996A	*PG* 87.3, 2872B
John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, *PG* 88, 632–1209					*PG* 88, 796C, 81 797C, 812C	
Cyril of Skythopolis, *Life of Euthymios, Life of John*, *Life of Cyriacos*, ed. E. Schwartz (Leipzig, 1939)			σεληνιάζεται: *Life of Euthymios* 54.3 and *Life of Cyriacos* 9.17 = ed. Schwartz, 76.15, 228.11		*Life of Euthymios* 50.35, 57.23 = ed. Schwartz, 73 line 11, 78 line 25	*Life of John* 17.3 = ed. Schwartz, 214 line 23

	Demonic Ecstasy				Mystic Ecstasy	
Work	ἔκστασις	ἔκστασις φρενῶν	σεληνιασμός/λύττη		ἔκστασις	
Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger, ed. P. Van den Ven (Brussels, 1962)				101.10–14, 195.6–8, 243.1–3 = ed. Van den Ven, 78.18–22, 172.17–19, 217.21–3	57.28, 71.9, 103.1, 123.32, 129.3, 134.1, 186.25, 210.1, 256.20 = ed. Van den Ven, 51.11, 61. 8, 80.25, 104.19, 116.14, 126.12, 165.3, 180.19, 222.10	8.3; 29.2, 104.4, 104.29, 106.9, 160.17, 176.4 = ed. Van den Ven, 9.13, 29.16, 81.27, 82.23, 86.7, 142.16, 155.23
Live of Martha, ed. P. Van den Ven (Brussels, 1962)				41.3–8 = ed. Van den Ven, 283.26–284.5	11.3, 57.19 = ed. Van den Ven, 261.18, 301.6	17.9–10 = ed. Van den Ven, 265.21–2
Life of Daniel the Stylite, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1923)					21.1–2, 96.17 = ed. Delehaye, 21.18–22.1, 90.17	
Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of Symeon Salos and Life of John of Cyprus*, ed. A.-J. Festugière and L. Rydén (Paris, 1974)				*Life of John*: 38.132–141 = ed. Festugière, 390.16–23		
Marc the Deacon, *Life of Porphyrios of Gaza*, ed. H. Grégoire and M.-A. Kugener (Paris, 1930)	90.3 = ed. Grégoire and Kugener, 70.9				7.12 = ed. Grégoire and Kugener, 7.12	
Life of Theodore of Sykeon, ed. A.-J. Festugière (Brussels, 1970)		159.39–40 = ed. Festugière, 134.29–30				162.15–21 = ed. Festugière, 146.13–19

Chapter 4

The Heavenly City: Religious and Secular Visions of the Other World in Byzantine Literature

Carolina Cupane

In the Middle Ages, the fate of man after death was the most urgent and at the same time the most terrifying question for a Christian. Taking as their starting point the Judaic apocalyptic tradition, writers as far back as the early Christian years sought to dispel the agonizing uncertainty surrounding the subject by creating vivid depictions of the place where souls resided after death.[1]

The detailed description of the Underworld's topography became something of an obsession during the medieval period, as evidenced by the substantial number of literary works in both the East and West that explore the fate of the soul after death and particularly the soul's journey to Paradise and Hell. But in order to cross into the unseen world and to describe it, hence making it visible to their fellow men, the authors of these accounts needed to invent a special medium, none having ever returned to the earth from the realm of death to narrate his experience.[2] This important function was undertaken by the dream or, more accurately, the divinely sent vision, since God alone, through revelation, could allow exceptional and holy men to behold the Underworld. This literary device prevailed to such a degree that it gradually developed into an independent literary genre, known as 'Visions of the Other World'.[3] While such visions answered to very real spiritual needs of people in this period, they also had an unquestionable didactic power, and it was for this reason that the Church

[1] Descriptions of the Underworld are found in classical Greek literature as well as other ancient literatures. For an overview, see S. Lampakis, *Οἱ καταβάσεις στὸν Κάτω Κόσμο στὴ βυζαντινὴ καὶ στὴ μεταβυζαντινὴ λογοτεχνία* (Athens, 1982), 11–39; see also H.R. Patch, *The Other World according to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, MA, 1950), 1–26.

[2] The only exception is the Virgin Mary, who is entitled to descend physically into the Underworld, see Lampakis, *Οἱ καταβάσεις*, 46–9.

[3] On the history of the genre in the medieval West, see P. Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981), and for Latin literature particularly, C. Carozzi, *Le voyage de l'âme dans l'au-delà d'après la littérature latine (Ve–XIIIe siècle)* (Rome, 1994).

used them from the outset as a tool for imposing its own ascetic *Weltanschauung*. To such an end, it was more convenient to instil fear than promise eternal bliss, which explains why most of the visions describe the gloomy Inferno with its horrendous torments rather than the sweetness and light of Paradise.[4]

In Byzantium this kind of visions, except for the learned satirical dialogues in the tradition of Lucian[5] such as the twelfth-century *Timarion*[6] or the fourteenth-century *Mazaris*,[7] were established as literary genre only at a very late stage. All were written in the literary vernacular of the time, just as the modern age was dawning, and they were composed in fringe areas of the former Byzantine Empire.[8]

Since all of these works were 'descents' concerned exclusively with the Underworld and the torments of Hell, they will not detain us here. One comment will suffice: for completely different reasons, there is no sign in any of these texts of an intimate relationship between the vision on the one hand, and holiness of the visionary on the other. On the contrary, in both the vernacular and the learned texts, visitors to Hell are ordinary people devoid of any particular gifts. Their visions are signs neither of special privilege nor of holiness.[9]

In the earlier Byzantine centuries, of course, blessed ascetics were granted visions of Paradise and Hell, as witnessed by various Saints' Lives, although

---

[4] On such visions in the Western literature see D.D.R. Owen, *The Vision of Hell* (Edinburgh and London, 1970), especially 6–7, 260–272 (on the intention to frighten than to edify); for Byzantine visions, see H.-G. Beck, *Die Byzantiner und ihr Jenseits. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte einer Mentalität* (Munich, 1979), in particular 24–6.

[5] See Lampakis, Οἱ καταβάσεις, 82–111.

[6] For the edition and Italian translation of the text, see R. Romano, *Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione* (Naples, 1974), text reprinted with a few corrections in R. Romano, *La satira bizantina dei secoli XI–XIV* (Turin, 1999), 108–75; on the work's literary significance, see especially M. Alexiou, 'Literary Subversion and the Aristocracy in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: A Stylistic Analysis of the *Timarion* (chs 6–10)', *BMGS* 8 (1982–83), 29–45, and M. Alexiou, *After Antiquity. Greek Language, Myth and Metaphor* (Ithaca and New York, 2002), 100–111, 470–471.

[7] For the edition and English translation of the text, see J.N. Barry et al., *Mazaris' Journey to Hades or Interviews with Dead Men about Certain Officials of the Imperial Court* (Buffalo, 1975); text reprinted with a few corrections and an Italian translation in Romano, *La satira bizantina*, 469–563.

[8] On these texts, see Lampakis, *Οἱ καταβάσεις*, 156–216, and Beck, *Jenseits*, 36–41; more recently the *Apokopos* by Bergadis has been re-edited by P. Vejleskov (Cologne, 2005) with an English translation by M. Alexiou; see also the posthumus, critical edition of N.M. Panayotakis, *Παλαιά και Νέα Διαθήκη: ανώνυμο κρητικό ποίημα (τέλη 15ου–αρχές 16ου αι.)*, edited by S. Kaklamanis and G.K. Mavromatis (Venice, 2004).

[9] In the satirical dialogues the phenomenon can be explained in its classic setting, whereas the strong moralizing character of the demotic texts is directed programmatically to all people.

this motif was neither prominent in the overall context of the narrative, nor particularly developed in literary terms. Pious hermits often received the gift of seeing, with their spiritual eyes, the souls of their saintly, deceased brothers led heavenwards – St Antony,[10] abba John Kolovos[11] or St Pachomios[12] are only a few of the best known examples.[13] More rarely, holy men saw the souls of sinners cast into the flames and tortured.[14] It was highly unusual, however, for the visionaries to be allowed in their ecstasy to pass through the gates of Paradise; and even then they were not permitted, or did not even desire, to relate what they had seen. Thus, Theodore of Sykeon,[15] for example, or other ascetics,[16] who in a state of ecstasy found themselves the witnesses of eternal rejoicing, or incessant tortures, never made more than a simple reference to the fact.

Sometimes, however, these pious visionaries reveal more, as in the case of the ascetic Paternouthios who lived in the desert from a young age. At some point he ascended to Heaven in a vision and had the experience of viewing the indescribable prospect of Paradise and the hoped-for bliss of the ascetics. With his own eyes (*en sarki*) he saw the Heavenly Kingdom and met the saints who resided there. And as a proof he took an enormous fig whose scent had the power to heal illness for many years afterwards.[17] Abba Makarios had a similar experience. After

---

[10] *Life of Anthony* 60, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine*, (Paris, 1994), 294–8.

[11] *Apophthegmata Patrum* (systematic collection) 13.17, ed. J.-C. Guy, *Les Apophthegmes des Pères, collection systématique*, vol. 2 (Paris, 2003), 247–9.

[12] *Life of Pachomios* 93, ed. F. Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii Vitae graecae, vita prima* (Brussels, 1932), 62.

[13] For a catalogue of relevant passages in early Byzantine hagiography, see B. Lienhard, *Träume, Visionen und andere imaginäre Erfahrungen in der frühbyzantinischen hagiografischen Literatur* (PhD diss.; Jena, 2005), 161–76.

[14] The first and most important person deemed worthy to behold this terrible vision was the Apostle Paul, whose vision became one of the most influential for all the medieval texts, both in Byzantium and the West. The *Visio Pauli* was published by C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses apocryphae Mosis, Esdrae, Pauli, Iohannis, item Mariae dormitio* (Leipzig, 1866), 34–69, see the relevant passage on 57–62; in Paul's steps followed Saint Anthony, who in a vision saw a long-armed black giant dragging down to Hell souls who were trying to climb up to Heaven (*Life of Anthony* 66, ed. Bartelink, 308–11). On the apocryphal literature of visions, see J. Baun, *Tales from another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007).

[15] *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* 162, ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1970), 147.53–71.

[16] For example *Apophthegmata Patrum* (systematic collection) 3.48, ed. Guy, vol. 1 (Paris, 1993), 177; *Apophthegmata Patrum* (alphabetical collection), *PG* 65, 408–9.

[17] *Historia monachorum*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (Brussels, 1961), 10.20–2; Engl. trans. N. Russell, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (London, 1981); see also D.I. Kyrtatas, Τα όνειρα της ερήμου. Πειρασμοί και εσχατολογικές

spending a long time at prayer, he was blessed with a visit to Eden, the reflection of the true Paradise (*antitypon tou alēthous paradeisou*). He wandered for three weeks in the desert without food before he fainted. Then an angel brought him to a marvellous garden, guarded by spirits, in which every sort of wonderful fruit grew to an enormous size. The monk sojourned there for seven days and then decided to return to his brothers, taking some fruit with him as proof.[18]

Whether or not such descriptions of Paradise as a garden reveal a close connection with reality (whether, that is to say, they sprang from experiential reality, such as an actual or even imagined stay in a desert oasis)[19] is impossible to say. They nevertheless reflect a notion well known already from the New Testament that conceived Paradise as the earthly Paradise, the Garden of Eden, the dwelling place God granted to Adam and Eve, which was not, however, identical with the place of perfect bliss – the Kingdom of Heaven.[20] The form and structure of these narratives of Paradise followed the tradition of describing a *locus amoenus*,[21] which is apparent already in the Homeric epics.

By contrast, the vision of Martha, the blessed mother of Symeon the Stylite the Younger, reflects the apocalyptic tradition.[22] Here the Kingdom of Heaven is identified with and described as a city and, in particular, as the Heavenly Jerusalem.[23] The description is not eschatological in character; rather it is brief and lacks decorative details. While sleeping in the night, Martha dreamt that she ascended to Heaven where she was received by the Mother of God and the angels. She rested in a wonderful, indescribably luxurious palace which, as

προσδοκίες των πρώτων χριστιανών ασκητών', in D.I. Kyrtatas (ed.), *Όψις εννυπνίου. Η χρήση των ονείρων στην ελληνική και ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα* (Herakleion, 1993), 261–81.

[18] *Historia Monachorum*, ed. Festugière, 21.5–12; it is possible that this dream and other similar ones reflected the real desires of people who lacked on an everyday life even the basic necessities, see Kyrtatas, 'Τα όνειρα της ερήμου', 275.

[19] As suggested according to the attractive theory of Lienhard, *Träume*, 36–7.

[20] On this subject from a theological point of view, see the fundamental work of J. Daniélou, 'Terre et Paradis chez les pères de l'Église', *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 22 (1954), 433–72; on ideas and fantasies about Eden in literature, see the still indispensable work of A. Graf, *Miti, leggende e superstizioni del Medioevo*, vol. 1. *Il mito del paradiso terrestre* (Turin, 1892–93; repr. Milan, 2000). On descriptions of the earthly Paradise in Byzantine literature and art, see H. Maguire, 'Paradise Withdrawn', in A. Littlewood, H. Maguire and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture* (Washington, DC, 2002), 23–35.

[21] For a classic formulation, see H.-R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (10th edn; Munich, 1984), 191–209.

[22] *Life of Martha* 16–18, ed. P. Van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)*, vol. 2 (Brussels, 1970), 265.1–267.2.

[23] On this *topos*, see in particular, C. Angelidi, 'Remarques sur la description de la Jérusalem céleste', *Akten 16. Byzantinistenkongreß (Wien, 5.–9. Oktober 1981) = JÖB* 31.3 (1982), 207–15.

she was told, her son Symeon had erected through his ascetical life.[24] Located therein a special throne (*sellion*) was especially prepared for her. Next, the Mother of God led Martha to the Highest Heaven where there was another palace, incomparably more luxurious, near to which were the foundations of a third. These too were built by Symeon.[25] Finally, Martha turned her gaze from on high eastwards and enjoyed an unobstructed view of the entire expanse of Paradise and its outskirts (*proasteia*), established by God for the charitable ones. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first reference in a hagiographical text to a motif, which, as we shall see, would later enjoy great popularity.

Yet the motif of Paradise as a garden lives on. It appears, for example, in the vision of Niketas, the grandson of Philaretos the Merciful and author of the latter's *Life* (first half of the ninth century).[26] In the flowering garden grow date palms, hazelnut and pomegranate trees, over which climb grape vines. The grapes are the size of tall men, the hazelnuts resemble wine barrels. Paradise is not fenced off or enclosed; it has no guard to turn away those who would enter, but is encircled by a fiery river in which the damned are tormented. The only passage to it is across a bridge of just a hair's breadth.[27] In the middle of the garden Niketas sees Philaretos, sitting on a golden throne adorned with emeralds and priceless gems. Gathered round him is a crowd of men, women and children. Philaretos not only resembles the figure of Abraham; he has truly become Abraham.[28]

If the early Christian anchorites in the desert were hesitant in describing their experiences, the majority of the holy men living in the tenth-century capital were nothing if not loquacious. What had previously been of only secondary importance in the life of a saint – albeit an outstanding sign of divine pleasure along his path towards holiness – now became a central experience in his life and would play an important and lengthy part in the narration of the holy man's deeds. It is no coincidence that intense preoccupation with life in the Other World and the flowering of both older and newer eschatological notions were

---

[24] *Life of Martha* 17, ed. Van den Ven, 266.21–2: τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ παλάτιον ὃ ἔκτισε ὁ υἱός σου ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.

[25] *Life of Martha* 18, ed. Van den Ven, 5.8–9: εἰς οὐρανὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἶδον ἕτερον παλάτιον ... 'Καὶ τοῦτο τὸ παλάτιον ὁ υἱός σου ᾠκοδόμησεν· ἤρξατο δὲ καὶ τοῦ τρίτου τὰ θεμέλια τεθεικώς'.

[26] *Life of Philaretos*, ed. L. Rydén, *The Life of St Philaretos the Merciful Written by His Grandson Niketas* (Uppsala, 2002), 112.833–117.891.

[27] Both motifs appear frequently in western visions of the other world; see Patch, *Other World*, *passim* (for relevant passages see index on 374, 383); Owen, *Vision*, *passim* (index on 315, 320); on the bridge in particular, see P. Dinzelbacher, *Die Jenseitsbrücke im Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1973); on the diffusion of the motif in Byzantium, see Rydén, *The Life of Philaretos*, 43–4, with the older bibliography.

[28] *Life of Philaretos*, ed. Rydén, 114.870–1: Ὁ πάππος σου ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ Ἀβραὰμ ἔγινε ἀρτίως.

linked with the Byzantines' growing fear on the eve of the new millennium, as recent research has indeed shown.[29]

With regard to the particular subject of this chapter, celestial topography becomes more precise and more detailed in the tenth century. The Heavenly Kingdom is presented as a boundless country in which there are not one, but many cities with majestic private houses as well as places of worship, amidst fields and extensive gardens. As we shall see below, it is a representation, which mirrors the everyday reality of medieval cities, but the imagery has been transposed to the level of the fantastical. The author sets his heroes on an impressive stage awash with gold, brilliance and wonders, and in describing this setting an unending chain of repetitions and variants is played out.

One example is the story of Niphon, a reformed sinner once known throughout all the disreputable neighbourhoods of Constantinople. After his change of heart, the boundaries between the visible and invisible worlds vanish. Behind each person Niphon now sees the demons, who are besieging him; in every corner the incomprehensible awaits him. The skies above Constantinople are, to his eyes, bursting with miraculous signs; even the end of the world and the Second Coming are revealed to him.[30] He does not look on the heavenly city itself, but describes it to his listeners on the basis of a vision of a certain Sozomenos.[31] In his description we encounter once more the familiar lush garden – this time located in a forecourt – with flowers, trees laden with fruit and songbirds.[32] The city itself is not described in detail; palaces are referred to only vaguely, surrounding a courtyard enclosed by posts supporting a golden roof. The courtyard's interior can be glimpsed only through the spaces between the posts.[33]

---

[29] See especially, P. Magdalino, 'The Year 1000 in Byzantium', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2003), 231–69; P. Magdalino, '"What We Heard in the Lives of the Saints We Have Seen with Our Own Eyes": The Holy Man as a Literary Text in Tenth-Century Constantinople', in J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford, 1999), 83–112.

[30] *Life of Niphon* 40, 53, 82–95, 99–108, 118, 130, 134–5 and so on, ed. A.V. Rystenko, *Materialien zur Geschichte der byzantinisch-slavischen Literatur und Sprache* (Odessa, 1928; repr. Leipzig, 1982), 17–186 (different versions of several chapters at 187–238). On the dating of the *Life*, see L. Rydén, 'The Date of the Life of St Niphon, BHG 1371z', in S.T. Teodorsson (ed.), *Greek and Latin Studies in Memory of Cajus Fabricius* (Göteborg, 1990), 33–40. For an insightful analysis of this *Life* as well as of the other Middle-Byzantine visions I will deal with below, see A. Timotin, *Visions, prophéties et pouvoir à Byzance, Étude sur l'hagiographie méso-byzantine (IX-XI siècles)* (Paris 2010), 283–342.

[31] *Life of Niphon*, ed. Rystenko, 62–4.

[32] *Life of Niphon*, ed. Rystenko, 62.26–8: εὑρέθη ἐν προαυλίῳ θαυμαστῷ ἐν ᾧ ἦν φῶς ἄυλον καὶ καθαρὸν καὶ ἄνθη πολυποίκιλα ῥόδα τὲ καὶ κρίνα καὶ φυτὰ ὑψίκομα λίαν ...

[33] *Life of Niphon*, ed. Rystenko, 63.6–10: ἔρχονται ἐπὶ στάβαρα χρυσοφόρα, καὶ ἦσαν πετάσαντες τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ πέραν διὰ τῶν ὀπῶν τῶν χρυσῶν σταβάρων·

The resting place of souls appears as a city in a flowering plain in the vision, which leads the pious Prince Ioasaph to become insensible to womanly charms and embark once and for all on the ascetic path. His story is told in the 'edifying tale' of *Barlaam and Ioasaph*. In the open air under the trees Ioasaph beholds thrones and couches with indescribably beautiful mattresses and coverings adorned with gold and precious stones, all of which are prepared for the righteous. The Heavenly City is surrounded by golden walls and its battlements are built of gems. The squares and streets are flooded with perpetual light and hosts of angels fly about singing praises to God.[34]

In the aforementioned texts, the Heavenly City is present but described in rough outline. However, two Saints' Lives are preserved from the same period that offer a more detailed image combining familiar motifs from the Biblical and apocalyptic tradition of the heavenly Jerusalem with features of the urban reality of Constantinople.[35]

While in a state of wakefulness, probably in the year 933, the monk Kosmas saw a vision, first of Hell and then of Paradise, whither he arrives in the company of Sts Andrew and John.[36] Together with the two saints Kosmas first passes a flowering field where he sees Abraham with the children who died unbaptized,[37] and then a large olive grove with countless trees. Beneath each tree are placed tents and beds on which people are resting, among whom are some of his acquaintances.[38] They are the dwelling places prepared by God for the righteous in accordance with their deeds. Afterwards, Kosmas enters the city, which is girded by 12 concentric walls constructed of 12 kinds of precious stones of varying colours and pierced by gold and silver gates. The floors, houses and columns are all made of pure gold. At one end of the city stands a magnificent palace, which

---

καὶ βλέπουσιν πάλιν ἐκεῖ ἄλλην αὐλὴν καὶ παλάτια δεδοξασμένα καὶ περίβλεπτα σφόδρα σφόδρα.

[34] *Barlaam and Ioasaph* 30, ed. R. Volk, *Die Schriften des Ioannes von Damaskos*, vol. 6.2. *Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria)* (Berlin and New York, 2006), 315.210–317.220, see also 317.227–318.235, on the following vision of Hell, which brings about the young man's conversion.

[35] See Angelidi, 'Remarques', 209–12; Magdalino, 'Holy man', 96–100; on the similar development in western visions, see Dinzelbacher, *Vision*, 108–9.

[36] Two versions of the text exist. The first is brief and is included in the *Synaxarion*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Brussels, 1962), 107–14; here is used the extended version, ed. C. Angelidi, 'La version longue de la vision du moine Cosmas', *AnBoll* 101 (1983), 73–99, esp. 80.41–3: ἔξω γεγονὼς ἑαυτοῦ ... τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς μὲν ἔχων ἀνεῳγμένους...

[37] *Vision of Kosmas*, ed. Angelidi, 84.138–85.145; the young Niketas, grandson of Philaretos, had also encountered Abraham enthroned in Paradise (see above, p. 57).

[38] *Vision of Kosmas*, ed. Angelidi, 85.150–152: καθ' ἕκαστον δένδρον οἷον σκηνὴ ἦν καὶ κλίνη καθ' ἑκάστην σκηνὴν καὶ ἐφ' ἑκάστην κλίνην ἄνθρωπος, ἐν οἷς ἀναγνώριζον πολλοὺς ...

Kosmas visits. In the reception hall he sees a marble table stretching from wall to wall and a spiral staircase leading to a balcony.[39]

The sequence of visions constituting half of the *Life of Basil the Younger* presents a more complex image of the Heavenly City.[40] One of the peculiarities of this idiosyncratic text is that the person who is granted the privilege to visit Heaven and experience the revelation is not the saint himself, but his disciple Gregory. The latter is not even a monk, but a simple layman who cannot in any way be said to belong to the category of people usually deemed worthy of a vision. He does not display any particular Christian virtues,[41] but his curiosity to learn about the life after death of people he has known is irrepressible. Gregory does not merit the gift of a supernatural vision, nor has he prepared himself accordingly through fasting and prayer. It comes to him unexpectedly in his sleep and the boundaries between what is of earth and what of Heaven, between this world and the next, are in the beginning blurred.[42] Gregory dreams one night that, as he is on his way to Blachernai to visit Basil, the road is suddenly transformed into a narrow, steep ascent reminiscent of the hair-thin bridge in the *Life of Philaretos*.[43] For anyone familiar with apocalyptic literature, both

[39] *Vision of Kosmas*, ed. Angelidi, 85.162–86.188; on the description of the heavenly city, see Angelidi, 'Remarques', 208–10 and more recently H. Maguire, 'The Heavenly City in Ekphrasis and in Art', in P. Odorico and Ch. Messis (eds), *Villes de toute beauté. L'ekphrasis des cités dans les littératures byzantines et byzantino-slaves* (Paris, 2012) 37–48. On the heavenly court as a mirror of the imperial one with which it is eventually identified, see H. Maguire, 'The Heavenly court', in H. Maguire (ed.) *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, DC, 1997), 247–58; see also W.T. Woodfin, 'Celestial Hierarchies and Earthly Hierarchies in the Art of the Byzantine Church', in P. Stephenson (ed.) *The Byzantine world* (London and New York 2010), 303–19, esp. 309–10.

[40] For a key study of the complex manuscript tradition and the thematic organization of this highly complicated text, see C. Angelidi, *Ὁ Βίος του ὁσίου Βασιλείου τοῦ Νέου* (Ioannina, 1980).

[41] This is just one of numerous similarities linking the *Life of Basil the Younger* with that of Andrew the Fool: L. Rydén, 'The Life of St. Basil the Younger and the Date of the Life of St. Andreas Salos', in C. Mango and O. Pritsak (eds), *Okeanos. Essays presented to Ihor* Ševčenko *on his Sixtieth Birthday = Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), 568–86.

[42] Awaiting the forthcoming edition of the *Life* with English translation by A.-M. Talbot and D. Sullivan my analysis is based on the text in the edition by A.N. Veselovskij, *Sbornik Otdela russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoj akademii nauk* 46.6 (St Petersburg, 1890) (henceforth: *VBas* I), 10–48 (vision of Gregory and narrative of the death of Theodora with the description of the heavenly monasteries), and 53.6 (St Petersburg, 1891) (henceforth: *VBas* II), 3–173 (Gregory's second vision with the description of the heavenly Jerusalem); see the edition by S.G. Vilinskij, *Zapiski Imperatorskogo novorosijskogo universiteta* (Odessa, 1911), for another version of the text).

[43] *VBas* I, 12: εὑρέθην αἰφνιδίως εἰς ἀνωφερές τι ἀνιὼν διαβατήριον λίαν στενώτατον; cf. *Life of Philaretos*, ed. Rydén, 114.874–115.875: στενή ἐστιν ἡ γέφυρα ὡς

then and today, this is a tell-tale sign that the road has left behind the world of Constantinople and is leading instead to the Other World. The magnificent palace (*oikos perikallēs kai peridoxos*), more beautiful still than the buildings of the imperial palace, is inhabited by the saint's recently departed servant, Theodora. And of course the dwelling has a supernatural nature and function: it serves as a half-way house for the souls Basil has saved through his prayers and asceticism, in anticipation of the Last Judgment and Resurrection.[44]

In describing the palace the author borrows visual elements from portraits of the Heavenly City in the apocalyptic tradition, such as the golden pavement of the courtyard.[45] At the same time he still represents Paradise as a garden: next to the courtyard is a park (*paradeisos*), which is, however, different from the Garden of Eden.[46] Basil himself has planted it, just as he built the palace, through his ascetic labours. East of the courtyard are buildings of incredible grandeur, described in detail, which are reached by way of an ascent. Nearby, again as in the vision of the monk Kosmas, an enormous emerald table stands in the shade of an almond tree and on it has been spread a banquet for the blessed ones saved by Basil.[47] However, this table does not belong to the furnishings of Paradise itself for it is not inside the heavenly city, but stands in its forecourt.

On the appearance of the City of Paradise we have already been primed by Theodora's long narrative – inserted into Gregory's dream – about her posthumous journey to Heaven in the company of two angels.[48] Having passed through 21 customs stations by the aid of angels, Theodora enters through a crystal and gold gate guarded by an angel to find herself in a large plain traversed by a river. She visits the various parts of this new landscape: first an area covered with a shelter of skins, then a courtyard, followed by the throne of God surrounded by the heavenly hosts. To the right is another enormous area, 100 times larger than Constantinople,[49] where the tents of the saints are

---

τρίχα ὑπάρχουσα, and also *Vision of Kosmas*, ed. Angelidi, 83.101–3: ὑπῆρχε ὁδὸς στενὴ λίαν καὶ τεθλιμμένη, ὡς μηδὲ ὅλον ἴχνος ποδὸς δύνασθαι ταύτην χωρεῖν.

[44] *VBas* I, 12–13.

[45] *VBas* I, 42: τόπον ξένον καὶ παντελῶς παρηλλαγμένον καὶ ἦν τὸ δάπεδον αὐτοῦ ἐξαστράπτον, περικοσμημένον χρυσαῖς πλαξίν.

[46] *VBas* I, 46: ἐὰν οὖν λοιπὸν εἴδῃς τὸν παράδεισον, ὃν κατὰ ἀνατολὰς ἐν τῷ Ἐδὲμ ὁ Κύριος πεφύτευσε, μειζόνως ἔχεις ... καταπλαγῆναι, ἐπεὶ οὗτος πρὸς ἐκεῖνον σκιὰ πέφυκε καὶ ἐνύπνιον.

[47] *VBas* I, 43: τράπεζα μεγίστη ... ἐκ λίθου σμαράγδου ὡραίως λελατομημένη καὶ κατασκευασμένη; cf. *Vision of Cosmas*, ed. Angelidi, 86.182: τράπεζα ἐκ μαρμάρου πᾶσα ρωμαϊκοῦ.

[48] *VBas* I, 14–42; for the description of the Heavenly City, see 37–40.

[49] *VBas* I, 39: ἑκατονταπλασίως τῆς κατὰ κόσμον βασιλευούσης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως; see also Magdalino, 'Holy man', 97–9. On the identification of Jerusalem with Constantinople

set up according to categories (apostles, prophets, martyrs and so on). The tents resemble palaces, each built in a different style. Later, however, Gregory himself will visit the Heavenly Kingdom in his sleep[50] and will see with his own eyes the end of the World and the Last Judgment. The heavenly city, or New Jerusalem, corresponds on a larger scale to the plan of the forecourt of the park. But it also has some new features such as the 12 gates made of 12 different precious stones, which come straight out of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition,[51] or the temple set at the centre in which Christ himself will celebrate the Divine Liturgy.[52] To the east magnificent palaces are constructed around the nuptial chamber of Christ, wherein many tables have been prepared for every category of saint.[53] In addition, to the east of the heavenly city is a garden, and not just any garden but the very Garden of Eden, as stated explicitly in the text.[54] God sits on his throne, which is suspended in the air, and judges the righteous and the impious, who respectively stand to the right and left of his throne. On each forehead is inscribed his or her merits, a detail which, together with the hierarchical ranking of the sinners and especially of the saints, recalls later iconographic representations of the Last Judgement.[55]

---

already in the fifth century, see P. Magdalino, 'The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda', in R. Beaton and C. Roueché (eds), *The Making of Byzantine History. Studies dedicated to D.M. Nicol* (London, 1993), 3–34, and E. Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968), 121.

[50] *VBas* II, 12: ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ... καθευδήσας; the description of the Heavenly Kingdom together with the Last Judgment covers from page 13 to page 174. At the beginning and end of the vision Gregory asserts that ὡς ὕπαρ καὶ οὐκ ὄναρ ταῦτα ᾠμην κατιδέσθαι καὶ οὐκ ὀπτασίαν, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι καθαρὰν ἀλήθειαν εἶναι ὑπελάμβανον, even though elsewhere he has demonstrated full awareness that what he saw did not have a physical hypostasis (as at *VBas* I, 47: διὰ τὸ νοερῶς καὶ οὐχ ὕπαρ τοῖς ἐκεῖσε διάγων); the conscious use of ancient terminology is noteworthy.

[51] *VBas* II, 16–17; see Angelidi, 'Remarques', 208.

[52] *VBas* II, 155.

[53] *VBas* II, 156: νυμφὼν φρικωδέστατος καὶ παστὰς ἀσύγκριτος ... τράπεζα φρικτὴ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἔννοιαν ἀσύγκριτος; 157: ἑτέρα τράπεζα ... παραπλησίως ταύτῃ, φρικωδεστάτη ... ἡτοιμασμένη ... τοῖς δώδεκα προκρίτοις μαθηταῖς καὶ ἀποστόλοις ... ἄλλη παραπλησίως τῶν ἱεραρχῶν, ἑτέρα τῶν ἐνδόξων μαρτύρων.

[54] *VBas* II, 159: εἰσῆλθε εἰς τὸν κατὰ ἀνατολὰς τῆς αὐτῆς ἁγίας πόλεως συμπαρακείμενον θεῖον καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀείζωον παράδεισον ... οὗτος ἦν ὁ ἐν Ἐδὲμ κῆπος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀφ' οὗ ὁ Ἀδὰμ τὴν δεσποτικὴν ἐντολὴν προβὰς ἐξεληλύθει.

[55] *VBas* II, 25, 26: ὑπεράνω τῆς ὀφρύος γράμματα ἐνεγέγραπτο δηλοῦντα τὴν αὐτῶν ἀρετήν ... τοῦτο γὰρ παρεδήλου ἡ ... σεσημειωμένη ἐν τῷ μετώπῳ γραφή, τὴν πρᾶξίν τε φημὶ καὶ τὴν κλῆσιν. The same is true, of course, with the sinners who stand to the left of God's throne: *VBas* II, 31. Although elements of the Last Judgement are to be found earlier, the Byzantine iconography reached its full development in Byzantine art in the eleventh century and may well have been influenced by such literary descriptions.

I will pass over the vision of Paradise in the *Life of Andrew the Fool* because it adds very little to the typology of the Heavenly City. It is a cosmological vision in which the saint travels to the Third Heaven where he beholds the indescribable image of God enthroned. The journey starts through a garden resembling Eden, which, consequently, is considered an earthly landscape[56] and continues with the ascent toward the heavenly spheres.[57] In the Other World as perceived by Andrew the Fool there is neither man nor beast. It is an empty world[58] in which everything has symbolic meaning; a landscape, which has absolutely no connection with the urban organized space as we know it.

With this representation, which bears no relation to architectural reality, the vision of the Other World theme makes its last appearance in Byzantine literature – with the exception of the moralizing and satirical writings mentioned earlier. It is not to be found in either the later hagiographical writing or other literary genres. But this does not mean that the subject lost its popularity, since many late Byzantine manuscripts survive in which the aforementioned works were transmitted.[59] Its demise as a living genre is especially striking since in the West, by contrast, the vision of the Other World was becoming well established, from the twelfth century onwards, as an autonomous genre in both Latin and various Romance languages, while from the thirteenth century it appeared in the secularized guise of erotic allegory.[60] Just as a vision enabled entry into the

---

On the development of the iconography, see B. Brenk, 'Die Anfänge der byzantinischen Weltgerichtsdarstellungen', *BZ* 57 (1964), 106–26; on the interplay of literature and art, see H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ, 1981).

[56] See *Life of Andrew the Fool*, ed. L. Rydén, *The Life of St Andrew the Fool* (Uppsala, 1995), vol. 2, 46.489–52.602.

[57] *Life of Andrew the Fool*, ed. Rydén, 52.603–58.727.

[58] In the true Paradise the saint will see neither the blessed nor any buildings at all, as is underlined by L. Rydén, *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, vol. 1, (Uppsala, 1995), 61–2. The souls of the blessed are also absent from the Paradise which appears in the vision of Sozomenos, although buildings are present in that vision (see above, p. 59) and Symeon Stylite the Younger had also beheld an empty paradisiacal garden inhabited by only Adam and the good thief (*Life of Symeon*, ed. Van den Ven, vol. 1, 29.6–9).

[59] *The Life of Basil the Younger*, for example, met with such great success that it was rendered into demotic Greek and read in this version, as attested by the manuscript tradition, until at least the eighteenth century: see Angelidi, *Ο Βίος*, 20–21, 43–5, and E. Patlagean, 'Byzance et son autre monde. Observations sur quelques récits', in *Faire croire. Modalité de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XVe siècles* (Rome, 1981), 219–21.

[60] A rich bibliography exists on the development of allegorical love poetry in medieval Western literature. I refer here to only a few important contributions: C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford, 1936; repr. London, 1977); as well as H.–R. Jauss, 'Enstehung und Strukturwandel der allegorischen Dichtung', in H.–R. Jauss (ed.), *Grundriß der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, vol. 6 (Heidelberg, 1968), 146–244,

Kingdom of Death, in the same way it could open the doors into the Kingdom of Love, a paradigmatic 'Other World' of the imagination, which mirrors the Other World of religion.[61] In the Kingdom of Love, Eros assumes the qualities of the Christian God and at the same time of an emperor, since imperial power is modelled on that of God. Already towards the end of the twelfth century, in the treatise *De amore* by Andrea Capellanus[62] Eros appears as the eternal judge. He decides the fate of lovers, sends them assistance through the agency of his emissaries, the Erotes, who resemble Christian angels, judges human actions and imposes punishment on transgressors, or in the end forces them to submit to his power.[63]

The visit to the *paradisus amoris* in a dream is absent from Byzantine literature until its final phase when it suddenly appears in the romances of the Palaiologan period, serving as an autonomous and integral narrative feature. We shall not dwell here on the question of whether it was a conscious borrowing from Western literature,[64] or an independent, parallel development. However, I consider it certain that the late Byzantine writers drew inspiration for their secular Paradise from middle Byzantine narratives about the Heavenly City, from which they, naturally, erased all apocalyptic and religious elements, imbuing it instead with new, secular symbolism.

Mutual influence between Christian and pagan fiction was nothing new *per se*, but had always been present.[65] With regard to the visit to Paradise motif,

---

repr. in his *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Munich, 1977), no. 6, 154–218; M.-R. Jung, Études sur le poème allégorique en France au Moyen Âge (Bern, 1971), 122–69, 292–325; P. Pieheler, *The Visionary Landscape. A Study in Medieval Allegory* (London, 1971); A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge, 1976).

[61] Thus it is appositely named by H.-R. Jauss, 'Allegorese, Remythisierung und neuer Mythus', in M. Fuhrmann (ed.), *Terror und Spiel – Probleme der Mythenrezeption* (Munich, 1971), 187–209 (quotation on p. 196), repr. in his, *Alterität und Modernität*, no. 8, 285–307 (quotation on 294).

[62] Ed. H. Trojel, *Andreae Capellani regis Francorum De amore libri tres* (Copenhagen, 1892; 2nd edn, Munich, 1964); see L. Pollmann, *Die Liebe in der hochmittelalterlichen Literatur Frankreichs* (Frankfurt, 1966), and R. Schnell, *Zur Rezeption des römischen und kanonischen Rechts in 'De Amore'* (Munich, 1982).

[63] See D. Ruhe, *Le Dieu d'Amours avec son paradis* (Munich, 1974), 84–91.

[64] As I have argued in earlier studies: C. Cupane, 'Ἔρως βασιλεύς. La figura di Eros nel romanzo bizantino d'amore', *Atti Accad. Sc. Lett. Arti di Palermo*, ser. 4, 33 (1973–74), 243–97; C. Cupane, 'Il motivo del castello nella narrativa tardo-bizantina: evoluzione di un'allegoria', *JÖB* 27 (1978), 237–62; C. Cupane, 'Concezione e rappresentazione dell'amore nella narrativa tardo-bizantina. Un tentativo di analisi comparata', in A.M. Babbi, A. Pioletti et al. (eds), *Medioevo Romanzo e Orientale. Testi e prospettive storiografiche. Atti Colloquio Intern. (Verona, 4–6 aprile 1990)* (Soveria Mannelli, 1992), 283–305.

[65] As has already been shown by R. Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichte und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1932); now see R. Pervo, 'The Ancient Novel

in particular, the mythical journey of Alexander the Great to the Isle of the Blessed,[66] as related in the later versions of Pseudo-Callisthenes' work, was transformed into hagiography in the *Life of Makarios Romaios*[67] and in this form subsequently influenced late Byzantine versions of the *Alexander Romance*.[68] In the *Life*, the three monks, Theophilos, Sergios and Hygieinos, set off eastwards in search of the ends of the world, and after surviving many adventures and marvelling at countless monsters they desire to see the Garden of Eden, 'where Adam and Eve dwelled, and beyond the Paradise toward the East lies the sky' ('*hopou* ēn *Adam kai Eua, kai anōthen tou Paradeisou kata anatolas ho ouranos anapauetai*'), but into which no one 'born of woman' is allowed to 'enter'.[69] Here the mutual influence operates at the level of paradoxography and geographical narrative, both genres known from antiquity: the Paradise sought after by our pious travellers is a purely geographically defined space whose physical existence cannot be disputed. By contrast, in the Palaiologan romances it is a wholly allegorical place – its existence is exclusively literary.

In what follows, I shall try to show and comment upon some of the especially characteristic similarities between the erotic other world of the romances and the eschatological Heavenly City of the hagiographical texts from the middle Byzantine period. In *Livistros and Rodamne*[70] and *Belthandros and Chrysantza*[71] the Kingdom of Love appears as a city defended by a wall of priceless building materials. Inside are many stately buildings, which are not described in detail, as well as extensive gardens with springs and/or rivers.[72] Only a few buildings, or

becomes Christian', in G. Schmeling (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1996), 685–711.

[66] See R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* (Munich, 1977).

[67] Ed. A. Vassiliev, *Anecdota graeco-byzantina* (Moscow, 1893), 135–65; on the *Life of Makarios* as well as on the *topos* of the journey to the earthly Paradise in hagiographical texts, see C. Angelidi, 'Εμπορικοί και αγιολογικοί δρόμοι (4ος–7ος αἰ.). Οι μεταμορφώσεις της ταξιδιωτικής αφήγησης', in *Η καθημερινή ζωή στὸ Βυζάντιο. Τομές καὶ συνέχειες στὴν ἑλληνιστικὴ καὶ ρωμαϊκὴ παράδοση (15–17 Σεπτ. 1988)* (Athens, 1989), 675–85, esp. 682–4.

[68] See U. Moennig, *Die spätbyzantinische Rezension *ζ des Alexanderromans* (Köln, 1992), 234–51.

[69] *Life of Makarios*, ed. Vassiliev, 152.

[70] Two of the versions in which the Romance is preserved have recent critical editions. The first (=*a*) is by P.A. Agapitos, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου και Ροδάμνης* (Athens, 2006), and the second by T. Lendari, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου και Ροδάμνης (Livistros and Rodamne). The Vatican Version* (Athens, 2007). Here I use version *a*, which seems to be closer to the original form of the work.

[71] Ed. C. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini* (Turin, 1995), 217–305.

[72] The *ekphrasis* of the Erotokastro covers verses 246–483 in *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, and verses 285–459 in *Livistros and Rodamne*; see C. Cupane, 'Künstliche Paradiese. Ortsbeschreibungen in der vulgärsprachlichen Dichtung des späten Byzanz', in Ch. Ratkowitsch (ed.), *Die poetische Ekphrasis von Kunstwerken. Eine literarische Tradition*

parts of them, within the overall city plan are described more fully. In *Belthandros* a room (*triklinion*) adorned with statues and relief carvings is mentioned (vv. 335–425), and a *kouvouklion* (vv. 442–54), a courtyard with a bath and basin (vv. 455–72) and a veranda (*hēliakos*) (vv. 473–83), where the throne of King Eros is located – it is the place where the hero will receive his orders. In *Livistros* there is also an interior courtyard with trees and springs and a gate guarded by an armed man (vv. 285–303), a triumphal arch (*tropikē*) (vv. 317–40), a veranda (*hēliakos*), a basin surrounding a fountain (vv. 432–50) and finally a hall in which Eros, enthroned and surrounded by his courtiers, dispenses justice (vv. 474–9). As we noted above with regard to the hagiographic visions, here too the dream operates the transition from the world of romantic adventure to the Other World of the erotic allegory.[73] In *Belthandros* this transitional device becomes clear only at the end when the Castle of Love suddenly disappears and the hero becomes aware (along with the reader) that his experiences were simply a dream.[74]

Just as in the religious visions of the Other World, in the Kingdom of Love there are the righteous (those who are in love) and the damned (those who resist Eros' powers). In *Belthandros* the two categories are frozen in relief representations that adorn the wall of the *triklinion*: winged Erotes with fiery tongues torment the damned or drag them enchained behind them.[75] This latter scene is reminiscent of Niphon's vision, in which the saint also sees the members of a merry company as people bound in chains and guarded by a black demon.[76] Another feature shared in common with the blessed and the damned in the *Life of Basil the Younger* is that all the figures in the carved depiction in *Belthandros* bear their name and merits inscribed on their foreheads.[77]

In *Livistros*, by contrast, the protagonist himself is seized by armed figures with wings and fiery tongues who put him in chains and drag him before the

---

der Großdichtung in Antike, Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit = Sitzungsberichte Österr. Akad. Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., 735 (Vienna, 2006), 221–45, esp. 235–40.

[73] See C. Cupane, ' Ἄκουσε τί με ἐφάνη. Sogni e visioni nella narrativa greca medievale', in G. Lalomia and A. Pioletti (eds), *Medioevo Romanzo e Orientale. Temi e motivi narrativi fra epica e romanzo. Atti VII Colloquio Internazionale (Ragusa, 8–10 maggio 2008)*, (Soveria Mannelli, 2010), 91–114.

[74] *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, ed. Cupane, verse 724: ὡς ὄνειρον ἐλύθηκε τὸ πρᾶγμα ὅσον εἶδε.

[75] *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, ed. Cupane, verses 340–341: ἔβλεπεν ... τὸ ἕνα ... τραχηλοδεσμωμένον | καὶ ἐρωτοσύρτην τύραννον τὰ ζώδια νὰ σύρνῃ.

[76] *Life of Niphon*, ed. Rystenko, 143: ὑπὸ ἑνὸς μαύρου ἅπαντας δεδεμένους ὀπισθάγκωνα ὑπὸ ἑνὸς σχοινίου καὶ συρουμένους.

[77] On the *Life of Basil the Younger*, see above p. 62 and n. 55; *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, ed. Cupane, verses 354–7: Καὶ εἰς τὸ καθένα ηὕρισκες γράμματα γεγραμμένα· | Ὁ μὲν τοῦ δεῖνος τοῦ ρηγός, ἔγραφε, θυγατέρα, ὁ δὲ καί, πάλιν ἔγραφε, τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ δεῖνος | τίς εὐγενὴς ρωμογενὴς πάσχει.

throne of Eros, with the result that Livistros believes he has already died and descended to the Kingdom of the Dead.[78] Livistros watches the proceedings in Eros' court and when his turn comes he shows repentance and obedience, and is ultimately treated mercifully.[79] But others were not so fortunate and have been condemned to unending tortures, such as one man who, totally naked, is dipped in water and tormented by a snake. Here, as in *Belthandros*, the scene is represented in a carving set inside a cistern, but the boundaries between art and life are blurred, the sculpture suddenly coming to life and speaking to the stunned Livistros.[80]

Not only the setting, but also the purpose of the love vision resembles that of the vision of the Other World, since both cases involve a conversion which must be brought about,[81] even though the goals of the two conversions are diametrically opposed. While Ioasaph, for instance, overcomes the temptations of carnal love after his vision of Paradise and Hell,[82] the same visionary experience leads Livistros and Belthandros to yield to love's bonds.[83]

But not everyone was prepared to accept such a semantic transmutation of a genuinely religious and moralizing motif. The great intellectual and high-ranking ecclesiastic official (*megas sakellarios*) Theodore Meliteniotes who wrote about a generation later did not approve it at all. For this reason he attempted in his allegorical poem *On Temperance*[84] to return to admonition while retaining the iconographic repertoire of the romances. The supernatural dwelling of

---

[78] *Livistros and Rodamne*, ed. Agapitos, verses 228–9: περιεστάθην ἄπειρα, σχεδὸν ὅτι ἀπετώρα | εἰς ἅδην ἐκατήντησα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν ἀφείθην.

[79] *Livistros and Rodamne*, ed. Agapitos, verses 505–25.

[80] *Livistros and Rodamne*, ed. Agapitos, verses 442–62.

[81] For this feature of visionary literature, see C. Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys. Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York and Oxford, 1987), esp. 31–4; it is significant that the experience of a vision, like that of conversion, is an individual and solitary experience: only the hero is allowed to enter the Paradise of Love.

[82] *Barlaam and Joasaph* 30, ed. Volk, 318.239–41: Ἥ τε δαιμονιώδης ἐπιθυμία τοῦ κάλλους καὶ τῆς ὡραιότητος τῆς ἀκολάστου κόρης ἐκείνης καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν δυσωδεστέρα βορβόρου καὶ σαπρίας αὐτῷ λελόγιστο.

[83] *Livistros and Rodamne*, ed. Agapitos, verses 523–4: καὶ ἀποτουνῦν παράλαβε ἀγάπην εἰς τὸν νοῦν σου | καὶ πόθον κόρης ἠθικῆς, ἐρωτοεξηργημένης; in *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, inscriptions foretell to the hero his love destiny, see, for example, ed. Cupane, verses 384–8, 421–5.

[84] The only, quite unsatisfactory edition, is that by M. Miller, 'Poème allégorique de Meliténiote', *Notices et Extraits des Mss. de la Bibliothèque Imperiale* 19.2 (Paris, 1858), 1–138; a new edition has been announced by A. Kambylis. The limited bibliography about the work and its author is assembled in S. Schönauer, *Untersuchungen zum Steinkatalog des Sophrosyne-Gedichtes des Meliteniotes mit kritischer Edition der Verse 1107–1247* (Wiesbaden, 1996), 3–14; see also Cupane, 'Castello', 246–60, for a thematic analysis.

Lady Temperance (*Sōphrosynē*)[85] does not appear to the anonymous wanderer in a vision since it is not a dream appearance but an actual encounter, which allegedly took place during the course of an idyllic walk in a *locus amoenus* on the first day of May.[86] The celestial owner herself guides the man who has lost his way[87] to the Castle, through seven obstacles including the dangerous, rickety bridge over the river encircling Paradise.[88] The Castle is guarded outside by Cerberus and inside by an armed Angel. The extensive, detailed description of the area together with the related allegorical interpretation of the various buildings covers the entire length of the poem. At a few points Meliteniotes' intention to marry the romance and hagiographic/eschatological traditions, even with the use of philological force, is especially noticeable. Such is the case, for example, of the first obstacle, the terrifying river,[89] which at the same time is said to be the mythical Alpheus and therefore has to be erotically joined with the Nereid Arethusa, who just happens to be nearby; no wonder that in the river's waves winged Eros and the Graces bathe![90]

After innumerable digressions, Meliteniotes returns in the poem's epilogue to the moralistic and eschatological tone, and offers an allegorical and typological interpretation of the adventure. Accordingly the sensible meadow (*aisthētos leimōn*) of Lady Temperance is nothing, then, but an image and type of the eternal spiritual meadow (*noētos leimōn*) of God.[91]

With Meliteniotes the Heavenly City disappears forever, to my knowledge, and thereafter the gate to Paradise remains sealed. There was in any case little time left for what we call Byzantium. These were difficult times for the empire and it is surely not a coincidence that the *megas sakellarios* insistently invokes the end of the world as imminent with the closing of the seventh Millennium.[92] Under Turkish and Venetian rule, the Byzantines continued to dream of the Other World, though they beheld only Hell.

---

[85] Sophrosyne/Temperance (ed. Miller, verses 201, 202) calls her dwelling the θεῖος δόμος and δῶρον Θεοῦ.

[86] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 28, 30–31: Οὐ φαντασία δαίμονος οὐδὲ παραφροσύνης, | [...] οὐκ ὄνειρος ὁ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐξαπατῶν ἀνθρώπους, | ἀλλὰ λαμπρὰ διήγησις και παναληθεστάτη.

[87] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 138–9: καὶ πόθεν παραγέγονας σὺ μόνος πρὸς τὰ τῇδε | μὴ συνιών, ὡς ἔοικε, πόθεν καὶ ποῦ πορεύῃ;

[88] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 229–35; the rocking bridge seems to be a version of the hair-thin bridge in the *Life of Philaretos*, see above n. 27.

[89] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 410: [the river is described] φοβερὸς πολεμιστὴς πάντων τῶν ὁδευόντων.

[90] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 305–27, 341–411.

[91] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 355–9.

[92] Meliteniotes, ed. Miller, verses 720–721: Ταύτην οὖν τὴν ἑπτάριθμον τῆς φυλακῆς αἰτίας | τῶν τοῦ ἑβδόμου προσδοκῶ συντέλειαν αἰῶνος. For the seventh millennium and apocalyptic predictions associated with it, see Magdalino, 'The Year 1000' (as above, n. 29).

Chapter 5

A Little Revelation for Personal Use

Christine Angelidi

By the standards of the erudition of the first half of the ninth century, Ignatios, deacon and *skeuophylax* of Hagia Sophia, metropolitan of Nicaea, and *grammatikos*, may be considered as a writer remarkably at ease with a wide range of literary genres. He was acquainted with versification and rhetorical techniques, and a learned scholar, quoting Homer and Hippokrates of Kos, and mentioning Hermogenes and Ktesias.[1] Yet, Ignatios' works lack the intellectual subtleness and theological insight displayed by his more or less contemporaries, such as the Patriarch Nikephoros or Theodore the Stoudite. In fact, his literary heritage is 'occasional'. His minor poetic works – funeral elegies and alphabetic verses – were addressed to friends and students;[2] he composed kanons for various saints and in a poem, now lost, he celebrated the Emperor Michael II for suppressing the revolt of Thomas the Slav.[3] He also authored on commission four Lives of patriarchs and holy persons deceased in the recent past,[4] contributing

[1] A. Kazhdan (in collaboration with L.F. Sherry and C. Angelidi), *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens, 1999), 351.

[2] Lists of Ignatios' genuine and dubious poetic works in C. Mango (in collaboration with S. Efthymiadis), *The Correspondence of Ignatios the Deacon* (Washington, DC, 1997), 12–14, and G. Makris, *Ignatios Diakonos und die Vita des hl. Gregorios Dekapolites* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1997), 11–15. See also the discussion by T. Pratsch, 'Ignatios the Deacon – Cleric of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, Metropolitan of Nicaea, Private Scholar, Teacher and Writer (A Life Reconstructed)', *BMGS* 24 (2000), 91–9.

[3] Thus composed after 823; on it, see Mango, *The Correspondence*, 12–13.

[4] On the *Life of Nikephoros*, the dating of its writing and, probable, rewriting, see I. Ševčenko, 'Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period', in A. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds), *Iconoclasm. Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. University of Birmingham, March 1975* (Birmingham, 1977), 125, and Mango, *The Correspondence*, 8–12; cf. Pratsch, 'Ignatios the Deacon', 97. The text is entitled 'monody', a term that does not necessarily imply its delivery on the patriarch's funeral (828 or 829), the translation of the patriarch's relics representing a second funeral. Thus, the dating of the text between 843 and 846 proposed by E. von Dobschütz, 'Methodios und die Studiten', *BZ* 18 (1909), 59, cannot be excluded. S. Efthymiadis, *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios* (Aldershot, 1998), 48, dates the *Life of Tarasios* during the patriarchate of Methodios (843–7), while von Dobschütz, 'Methodios und die Studiten', 59, associates it with the translation of the patriarch's relics on 13 March 847. Cf. also Mango, *The Correspondence*, 7, and Pratsch, 'Ignatios the Deacon', 97.

along with the Patriarch Methodios to the renewal of the hagiographic genre after the liquidation of Iconoclasm. Ignatios' œuvre includes an epistolographic corpus, which comprises 64 letters on various issues and of unequal length and style: short missives and detailed reports, highbrow formal letters and plain familiar messages.[5]

Except for a brief entry in the tenth-century lexicon, the *Souda*, which refers to the offices he held and includes a rough catalogue of his writings,[6] Ignatios is not mentioned in any other source. Given that he was not sanctified, he has not been honoured with a biography and, moreover, autobiographical data are sparse in his works. The fluidity of information led scholarship to propose various alternatives in dating the stages of his life and career. However, it is certain that Ignatios was related to two successive Iconophile patriarchs, Tarasios (787–806) and Nikephoros (806–15), who made him first deacon and then *skeuophylax* of the Great Church. After 815 Ignatios joined the Iconoclasts or, at least, he did not proclaim strong Iconophile beliefs, and at some point he became metropolitan of Nicaea. He was removed from his office in or shortly after 843 and retired as monk at the Pikridion monastery, in the vicinity of Constantinople, and subsequently at the Antidion monastery of the Bithynian Olympos. He was allowed to return in Constantinople where he spent the last years of his life as *grammatikos*.[7] In his late works he implicitly expresses repentance for pursuing an ecclesiastical career during the Second Iconoclasm and, furthermore, conveys his hope for rehabilitation by praising the mild attitude that both Tarasios and Nikephoros adopted with regard of Iconoclast dignitaries of the Church.[8]

Makris, *Ignatios Diakonos*, 27–8, dates the *Life of Gregory of Dekapolis* in ca 855, and relates the composition with the foundation of a church where the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew and of Gregory of Dekapolis were deposited by the founder, Joseph the Hymnographer. For the commissioners of Ignatios, see S. Efthymiadis, 'The Byzantine Hagiographer and his Audience in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in C. Høgel (ed.), *Metaphrasis. Reactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography* (Oslo, 1996), 78, and Makris, *Ignatios Diakonos*, 25. Efthymiadis, *The Life of Tarasios*, 49, discusses the probable commission of Tarasios' *Life* by Methodios.

[5] Edition, translation and commentary by Mango with the collaboration of S. Efthymiadis, *The Correspondence*, 28–205.

[6] *Souda* 84, ed. A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1967), 607–8. On the lemma as a self-portrait, see Mango, *The Correspondence*, 4.

[7] Ignatios' biography is discussed by Makris, *Ignatios Diakonos*, 9, 11, who places his birth before 795 and his death in 869/70; Efthymiadis, *The Life of Tarasios*, 38–46, opts for the 770s (for Ignatios' birth) and ca 847 (for his death); cf. also, Mango, *The Correspondence*, 19–21, 23–4; Pratsch, 'Ignatios the Deacon', 82–101, concludes that Ignatios was born in 785–90 and died in 847.

[8] On Ignatios' position with regard to the ecclesiastical policy after 787 and in 843, see the remarks of von Dobschütz, 'Methodios und die Studiten', 54–9, and Efthymiadis, *The Life of Tarasios*, 49–50.

Ignatios' hagiographical writings and correspondence provide information that would shed some light on his convictions and attitude during the uneasy time of the Second Iconoclasm. The letters he wrote offer additional details on the course of his life and career,[9] the persons he was acquainted with, the administrative and property problems of the metropolis of Nicaea he had to deal with, but also on daily life concerns – such as asking a borrowed book back, writing to a distant friend, acknowledging a gift, consoling another friend for the loss of a dear relative.[10]

The addressees fall in two roughly equal groups of secular and ecclesiastical persons, such as the Patriarch Methodios, high-ranking dignitaries of the empire and the court and bishops.[11] Among them, Nikephoros, stands as the most frequent correspondent of Ignatios' – if we accept that the recipient styled deacon and *skeuophylax*, and sometimes simply deacon, is the same person.[12] Nikephoros should probably have been a colleague and certainly a close friend of Ignatios': the 29 letters that are addressed to him show common literary interests and, also, intimate discussion of personal matters.

To Nikephoros are addressed the last three letters of the collection, written when Ignatios was in advanced age.[13] They refer to three phases of the same event that deeply affected his friend – a letter before the loss of a Nikephoros' close relative,[14] a consolation letter after the death and a letter in which Ignatios explains that old age, illness and bad weather conditions prevented him from properly expressing his sympathy to the mourning friend.[15] The missive is presented in the traditional 'reply-to-complaints' form, whereas the two others are rather unusual with regard to the rhetorical rules applied to the 'consolation-letter group' of the epistolographic genre.[16] In one of them, Ignatios chose to comfort his friend first by narrating the death of his own brother who was adorned with every quality, then by providing a list of examples of holy persons of the Old and New Testament, who all died, and finally by recounting the solitude

---

[9] Mango, *The Correspondence*, 19–21. For another chronological arrangement of the collection, see Kazhdan, *A History*, 348–9.

[10] See for example letters 5 and 62, ed. Mango, 34–7, 148–55, and letter 54 (to the Patriarch Methodios), ed. Mango, 134–7; on the latter see also, Kazhdan, *A History*, 350.

[11] See the prosopographical list established by Mango, *The Correspondence*, 22.

[12] On Nikephoros, see Mango, *The Correspondence*, 21–2.

[13] Letters 61, 62, 63, ed. Mango, 146–56.

[14] Probably Nikephoros' brother, which would explain why in the third letter Ignatios stresses the grief upon his own brother's death (as below, n. 15).

[15] See letter no. 63, ed. Mango, 154–7; the content implies that at that time Ignatios resided in or in the vicinity of Constantinople.

[16] On the conventional and rhetorical character of the sub-genre, see A. Littlewood, 'The Byzantine Letter of Consolation in the Macedonian and Komnenian Periods', *DOP* 53 (1999), 19–41.

he felt after the demise of the members of his family. Only in concluding does he employ the formulae adapted to such a letter: life on earth is short and difficult, mourning is vain; it is only virtue and spiritual achievements that fortify the soul and make possible the hope of an everlasting afterlife.

The first letter, written before the relative's death, is more intriguing. The narrative of a dream that Ignatios had the previous night covers two thirds of the text; then, an interpretation is provided relating the dream to the emotional situation of Nikephoros. For constructing it, Ignatios used two elements of his dream, each pointing to opposite, yet supplementary directions, one expressing the fear of an imminent death, while the second considered to convey the hope of recovery. However, the dream was more complex. Its imagery was deeply influenced by the worries of the dreamer's friend, but actions and plot would hardly suit the concerns of the addressee. In fact, Ignatios narrates a two-level dream that, immersed as it was in funerary feelings, reveals the dreamer's hopes for personal vindication and recognition.[17]

Ignatios' dream reads thus:

- I was gathering ripe grapes from a vine; I assembled them on a plate with other fresh and dried fruits (*tragēmata* is the Greek term he employs);
- I served them as unusual treats to distinguished and merry guests at a table filled with festive meals;
- An unknown man was walking before me; the table companions spat in his face, threw on the ground the dishes he was serving and excluded him from the festivities;
- They placed me among them as if I were one of them.

The narrative is presented in a plain literary form that lacks any rhetorical embellishment, except for the necessary transitions that do not alter the impression of a real, a non-literary dream. Intentionally or not, Ignatios succeeded in relating the experience in the form of a hasty transcript of the dream upon awaking. In other words, he acted as if he transposed the images of the dream into verbal signs.[18] There is no doubt that he regarded the dream as significant, identified its components as allegorical, proceeded consequently in decoding its

[17] Although the elements of the dream are disparate and acquire a meaning only when interrelated, a feature that suggests a genuine dream, it is unclear whether Ignatios actually had it. On literary dreams and the cliché form they adopt, see the remarks of C. Galatariotou, in this volume; cf. also, M. Mullett, in this volume, p. 19 n. 66.

[18] On the transposition of the dream imagery into verbal signs, which forms the an essential component of Freud's method for interpreting dreams, see for example S. Moses, 'The Cultural Index of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*', in D. Shulman and G.G. Stroumsa (eds), *Dream Cultures. Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (Oxford and New York, 1999), 303–14.

content and proposed three reading options. He left to the insightful judgement of his correspondent an 'outside' explanation. For his own interpretations he avoided to consider the dream in its entity; he preferred instead a more secure approach. He singled out two of his dream's images – the gathering of ripe grapes and the cheerful guests of the banquet – each offering a meaning that complied with the purpose of the letter.

'May God grant', he claims, 'that those grapes do not indicate the shedding of tears on account of the demise of your relative'. The wording is ambiguous and the use of the optative mood of the verb (*doiē*) suggests that Ignatios was aware of oneirocritical alternatives in interpreting grapes, which is a standard dream symbol throughout the centuries.[19] The second century dreambook of Artemidoros regards grapes as a good sign even out of season, especially with regard to women,[20] whereas the tenth-century dreambook of Achmet records grapes in two different and contradictory instances – one close to that of Artemidoros, the other providing a number of explanations, auspicious or ominous according to the season and the colour of the grapes.[21] A less sophisticated interpretation is to be found in the Byzantine alphabetical dream books of uncertain dating, but certainly compiled after the eighth century, where eating grapes is recorded as sign of rain.[22] It is not easy to discern the origin of the shift, which however may be attributed rather to the 'ruralization' than to the Christianization of the oneiromancy. There is no secure indication either in the letters or in any other of Ignatios' works that the scholar knew or

---

[19] Letter 61, ed. Mango, 148.13–14. The optative mood in the expression Εἰς τοῦτό μοι τὴν ὄψιν ἐκβήσεσθαι δοίη θεός seems to have been intentionally employed in order to stress the ambiguity of the dream's interpretation.

[20] Artemidoros 1.73.22–5, ed. R.A. Pack, *Artemidori Daldiani onirocriticon libri V* (Leipzig, 1963), 79: σταφυλὴ δὲ καὶ παρὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἀγαθὴ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὥραν, ὡς δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον τὰς διὰ τῶν γυναικῶν ἢ ἀπὸ γυναικῶν ὠφελείας σημαίνει· φανερὰς μὲν ἡ λευκή, λαθραίους δὲ ἡ μελαίνα.

[21] Achmet, ed. F. Drexl, *Achmetis oneirocriticon* (Leipzig, 1924), 23.25–24.5, 157.11–16. Cf. M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation. The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, Boston and Köln, 2002), 375 n. 3.

[22] As in the dreambooks of 'Nikephoros', 49, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Traumbuch des Patriarchen Nikephoros', in A.M. Koeniger (ed.), *Festgabe A. Ehrhard* (Bonn, 1922), 103; cf. 'Astrampshychos', 65, in S.M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium. Six Oneirocritica in Tranlation, with Commentary and Introduction* (Aldershot, 2008), 151, and 'Patriarch Germanos', 23, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Traumbuch des Patriarchen Germanos', Λαογραφία 7 (1923), 434, but cf. entry 169, ed. Drexl, 443, on unripe fruits signifying illness. The 'Anonymous' dreambook, line 390, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Anonyme Traumbuch des cod. Paris. Gr. 2511', *Λαογραφία* 8 (1925), 372, specifies that the eating of black grapes means confusion and strife. On the dating of the alphabetical dreambooks, see Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 7–14; see also, G.T. Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy* (M.Phil.; Birmingham 1994), 167, diagram 2.

used Artemidoros, or any other key of dreams. The reference to a Byzantine, alphabetical dreambook should not be excluded.[23] Yet an interpretation relying to widespread common and orally transmitted oneirocritical knowledge is more probable, and it is interesting to note that auspicious and ominous interpretations – grapes as sign of wealth, prosperity and professional success, and/or grapes as sign of sorrow and tears – survived for a long time and are still accordingly recorded in popular oneirocritical literature.[24]

In Ignatios' interpretation, grapes stood for tears and sorrow. In his intellectual world however grapes should also have been associated to the realm of Christian spirituality. Relying on images and symbolism of the Old and the New Testament, the patristic literature put forward vine and the grapes as metaphors for Jesus Christ and the Virgin, but also as the dissemination of the good word in hard times.[25] It is in this context that Ignatios used the image of collecting ripe grapes in another of this works. He employed it in the *Life of Tarasios*, more specifically in the section relating the saint's posthumous miracles. The text refers to the dream of Leo V, in which the emperor saw the deceased patriarch ordering someone named Michael to murder him. And indeed, the next day, Leo was slaughtered by his successor, Michael II.[26] Ignatios argues that this miraculous story was narrated to him by monks of Tarasios' monastery, from whom Leo had demanded the name of his murderer; 'I collected it (the dream and its fulfilment) like a ripe grape', he continues, 'and I offer it to the believers like a cup of good cheer'.[27] The *simile* serves to associate the oracular content of Leo's dream with its fulfilment on earth; it marks moreover the importance of a posthumous miracle.

---

[23] As suggested by Mango, *The Correspondence*, 203.

[24] The Προφητικός Ονειροκρίτης, allegedly based on Artemidoros, Egyptian papyri, practices of Mani and the otherwise unknown to me G. Pasini, compiled by G. Papandreou (several editions, Athens), attests of the multiple meanings of grapes; it especially records 'ripe, plump grapes' as symbol of professional success. Cf. also, for example, D. Vitsos, Ονειροκρίτης (Athens, 2005), 477, and the online *oneirokrites*: http://www.fatsimare.net/dreambook_A/p2020_articleid/82 (retrieved 15 September 2009).

[25] After John 15.1–8, with the exegetical commentary of John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, *PG* 59, 409–14. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *Hexahemeron*, ed. S. Giet, *Basile de Cesarée*, *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron* (Paris 1950; repr. 1968), 302–4; John Chrysostom, *In novam domenicam et in apostolum Thomam, PG* 63, 970; John of Damascus, *Oratio secunda in dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae*, 16, ed. P.B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5 (Berlin and New York, 1988), 534.12.

[26] On the narrative of this dream in historiography, see the contributions of G.T. Calofonos and P. Magdalino in this volume.

[27] *Life of Tarasios*, 67, ed. Efthymiadis, 163–4; similar wording in Ps.-Chrysostom, *In natalem Christi*, *PG* 56, 389.

'Grapes' are thus a symbolic item that links the earthly and the spiritual world and defines the space of ambiguous feelings concerning the afterlife[28] – space of sorrow for the alive, who are in grief, space of joy for the dead, who are approaching the 'tents of the Just'. I would, consequently, consider that the 'ripe grape' image in Ignatios' dream refers to a two-level setting of the narrative, which floats between ominous and auspicious feelings: feelings of sorrow and joy, feelings of worry and hope.

Ambivalent feelings impregnate, also, the narrative framework and the dream of Niketas, the grandson and biographer of Philaretos the Merciful. After the death of his grandfather, which occurred when Niketas was seven years old, the grieving boy was granted a vision-like-dream of Philaretos' afterlife. There, he saw a delightful garden prepared for the Just. Among the splendid plants he beheld, 'vines were growing with grapes as big as the size of a tall man, and people dressed in white stands eating from the fruit and rejoicing',[29] wrote Niketas in the early 820s.[30]

A century later, an anonymous text tells us how the nun Anastasia, lying on her deathbed, had a vivid vision of the Other World. When she came back to life, she narrated to the monastic community gathered around her and to her spiritual father that Michael, the angel, appeared to her in glory, took hold of her hand and led her to the heavens. They first visited the space occupied by the wicked and the angel explained all the extraordinary punishments they were suffering. Then, she was raised and shown the Paradise. 'And I saw there an olive tree with fruit and a vine with ripe grape clusters', she recalls once back on earth. 'And I saw there a prepared table – and there are the good things and the glory. And the angel said to me "It is the table of the merciful and of the just"'.[31]

The feasting of the Just in Paradise, glossing upon the Gospel (Luke 14), is an eschatological image that complements the description of the heavenly palace in the tenth-century apocalyptic visions. The 'table prepared for the Just' survives in several variants.

In the heavenly palace of the *Vision of Kosmas* that presents a temperate 'male' version of the *Vision* of Anastasia, a bare marble table alludes to the

---

[28] The association of grapes and vine with afterlife is well represented in the Early Christian funerary iconography, as for example the mural of the tomb of M. Clodius Hermes in San Sebastiano ad Catacumbas (Rome, late second century), and the sarcophagus fragment (Constantinople, second half of the fifth century) *Museum für Spätantike und byzantinische Kunst Berlin*, Inv. No. 3234.

[29] Ed. L. Rydén, *The Life of St Philaretos the Merciful Written by his Grandson Niketas* (Uppsala, 2002), 112.844–114.853.

[30] *Life of Philaretos*, ed. Rydén, 45–6.

[31] J. Baun, *Tales from another Byzantium. Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007), 409, cf. 421.

banquet that will be attended by the virtuous souls.[32] The long chapter of the *Life of Basil the Younger* on the vision of the Last Judgement recounts in detail that several tables were prepared in the delightful garden of the Other World for the Righteous to feast after the heavenly Liturgy. Another vision of the same *Life* describes the divine meal, the grapes and the exquisite drinking that adorn the festivity table set for the saint and his companions.[33]

That the heavenly surroundings and performances of the tenth-century apocalyptic visions make of the Other World the idealized reflection of Constantinople and of the imperial ritual is well established.[34] Still, ideological evolution is a slow process and there is no evidence that ninth-century visions of Paradise associated eschatological images with imperial propaganda or apocalyptic fears.[35] I believe that the two main elements of Ignatios' dream refer to different traditions. Grapes are an oneirocritical symbol; they are a metaphor pertaining to religious spirituality and a component of the garden of Paradise. Banquets are set in heaven for the Just to feast; they are also part of the funerary ritual.

---

[32] C. Angelidi, 'La version longue de la Vision du moine Cosmas', *AnBoll* 101 (1983), 86–7. Kosmas became monk after having served as *koitonites* of the Emperor Alexander. The title implies that he was castrated, and the importance of the role played by eunuchs in the heavenly court suggests that the composition of the text may be inscribed in the milieu of eunuchs of the earthly tenth-century imperial palace of Constantinople. On Kosmas and his vision, see also A. Timotin, *Visions, prophéties et pouvoir à Byzance. Étude sur l'hagiographie méso-byzantine (IX–XI siècles)* (Paris, 2010), 297–301.

[33] Ed. A. Veselovskij, 'Zhitie sv. Vasilija novogo', *Sbornik otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti imp. Ak. Nauk*, 53 (1892), 156–57, and *Sbornik* ... 46 (1889), 43. The edition is based on the *Mosquensis synod.* 249 of the sixteenth century. In fact, the important manuscript tradition of the *Life* does not go back earlier than the thirteenth century. The complexity of the tradition, the diversity of the themes treated, especially the long narrative of the Last Judgement, and the structural variety of the text have not yet completely clarified, in spite of my own analysis of the *Life* in C. Angelidi, *Ὁ βίος τοῦ ὁσίου Βασιλείου τοῦ Νέου* (Ioannina, 1980), and the important contribution of L. Rydén, 'The Life of St. Basil the Younger and the Date of the Life of St. Andreas Salos', in C. Mango and O. Pritsak (eds), *Okeanos. Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday = Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), 568–86, followed by that of P. Magdalino, '"What We Heard of the Saints We Have Seen with Our Own Eyes". The Holy Man as Literary Text in Tenth-Century Constantinople', in J. Howard-Johnston and R.A. Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford and New York, 1999), 83–112.

[34] C. Angelidi, 'Remarques sur la description de la Jérusalem céleste', *JÖB* 32/3 (1981), 210–211, 212, and Angelidi, 'La Vision du moine Cosmas', 97 and n. 19. Cf. C. Angelidi, 'Αφηγηματικά στοιχεία για την ανασύνθεση της φυσιογνωμίας της Κωνσταντινούπολης τον 10ο αιώνα', in A. Markopoulos (ed.), *Κωνσταντίνος Ζ΄ ο Πορφυρογέννητος και η εποχή του* (Athens, 1989), 117–25.

[35] P. Magdalino, 'The Year 1000 in Byzantium', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 233–70.

In discussing Anastasia's vision, Jane Baun argues that the banquet image of the tenth-century visions originates in the commemorative anniversary banquets, an example of which is registered in the ninth-century charter of the Saviour confraternity.[36] Indeed, ceremonial eating after the funeral and in commemorative anniversaries is one of the Christianized antique traditions that survived throughout Byzantium and are still part of the orthodox cult practices. Traditional meals are served during the ceremony, among which the *kollyba*, a cooked mixture of various seeds, dried and fresh fruit, also including dried ripe grapes.[37]

Set in a funerary context, the dream of Ignatios would be read thus: anxious about the incurable illness of the friend's relative, Ignatios dreamt that he collected grapes, a sign of sorrow and by extension an ominous omen foretelling the relative's death. He served the grapes along with other dried fruits to the guests of a banquet, which could represent the funerary ceremonial eating. However, when relating the dream to the friend he described the guests as cheerful and he employed the word *tragēmeta* to designate the serving, a term traditionally associated with the sweet course eaten at the end of a festive meal. Hence, the dream acquires a different signification. Ignatios dreamt that he presented to a joyful company dried fruits and seeds, and the ripe, therefore sweet, grapes he collected himself. In this context, the grapes stand as an auspicious omen, a promise of success and good fortune and a sign of his own spirituality. At this point, enters a key person, an unnamed individual who acts as a fellow servant at the table, but does not serve grapes; moreover, this person is eventually treated with disgust by the distinguished banqueters, whereas Ignatios was invited to join them 'as if I were one of them', he tells to his friend.

In relating the dream he had to Nikephoros, who was worried about the illness of a dear relative, Ignatios singled out one element of the dream – the grapes – which he interpreted in a standard oneirocritical mode in order to adapt it to the circumstances. For this interpretation he omitted to comment on the setting, the plot and the figures of the dream; instead he concludes the letter with the phrase: 'I am confident that I shall receive from you a release from my sorrow, taking into account the cheerful joyousness of the guests in my dream', implying the wish that a message from Nikephoros would announce the relative's recovery.

A second reading of the dream reveals, however, that the scenery and the plot clearly allude to personal expectations of the dreamer. The festive banquet of

[36] Baun, *Tales from another Byzantium*, 235–6.

[37] On the Ancient and Modern Greek rituals on death and burial, see M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 2nd edn rev. by D. Yatromanolakis and P. Roilos (Lanham, MD, 2002), 7–8 (on the food offers in Antiquity), 32 (on Early Christianity); on the Byzantine tradition of κόλλυβα, see P. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν βίος καὶ πολιτισμός*, vol. 4 (Athens, 1951), 209.

distinguished personalities is set in a place that floats between the earthly reality and the heavenly world. To the joyful company Ignatios offers the sweetness of his good word, symbolized by the grapes; he intends to impress them and to prevail over another, obscure individual – probably representing one or more ill-minded adversaries. The scene suggests professional difficulties and most probably the hope for the re-establishment in the former offices Ignatios held that would place him again within a high ecclesiastical circle. Even if the affair would not conclude in a satisfactory way on earth, the dream allowed him to aspire for a victorious solution in Heaven.

Instead of a mere dream, Ignatios was granted a little revelation styled as a dream. Nevertheless, the imagery of his dream was strongly affected by his friend's worries. Personal as it is, with regard to the plot, the dream is deeply immersed in death and funerary emotions. From this viewpoint and by the standards of the first half of the ninth century, Ignatios offered an exceptional and genuine document of self-expression.

Chapter 6

Prokopios' Dream Before the Campaign Against Libya: A Reading of *Wars* 3.12.1–5

Ilias Anagnostakis

In the summer of 533, the Byzantine army was preparing to campaign against the Vandal Kingdom of Libya with the stated intention of restoring the destitute King Hilderic to the throne, but in fact, Prokopios claims, in order to re-establish Roman rule over North Africa.[1] In Book III of the *Wars*, before narrating the campaign itself and in order to explain the background of the relations between the empire and the Vandals, Prokopios presents an overview of their history; then, he describes the discouraging environment in which the decision of Justinian to embark on the new war was made. He records that the majority of Byzantines were opposed to the campaign and considered it a likely catastrophe. Indeed, he notes, many recalled the disaster and distress that followed Basiliskos' war against the Vandals under Gaiseric in 468, which had cost too many lives and too much money.[2] Moreover, he adds, the soldiers, who had just returned from long and bitter warfare on the eastern frontier, had not yet enjoyed the comforts of home and were faced with the imminent prospect of being sent over unknown waters to confront major dangers by fighting against the great kingdom of the Vandals and Moors.[3] Anxiety in the face of a new conflict was intensified by a number of extraordinary events and signs that Prokopios records in the form of digressions in Books V and VII of the *Wars*.

Such a wondrous sign (*symbolon*) had been observed in the wine cellar of Belisarios. The incident is placed after the great bloodbath of the Nika Riots (January 532), and should be dated to May 533, a short time before Belisarios

[1] Prokopios, *Secret History*, ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth, *Procopius. Opera omnia*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1963) (henceforth: *Secret History*) 6.25. Among many approaches to the narrative of the campaign I cite here Av. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985), and A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2004); see also, G. Greatrex, 'Recent Work on Procopius and the Composition of Wars VIII', *BMGS* 27 (2003), 45–67.

[2] Prokopios, *Wars*, ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth, *Procopius. Opera omnia*, vols 1–2 (Stuttgart, 1962–3) (henceforth: *Wars*) 3.10.2. On the detailed account of Basiliskos' campaign, see *Wars* 3.6.

[3] *Wars* 3.10.3–6.

set off for the Libyan campaign.[4] Prokopios reports that eight months after the vintage the wine began to repeatedly ferment like must and spill out of the storage jars, flooding the floor of the wine cellar, to everyone's bemusement. The workers in the cellar endeavoured to minimize the damage and those who beheld the event considered it a sign of the master's future happiness and wealth.[5]

Wine is a well-attested symbol of blood and the abundant spilling and/or flooding of it stands for bleeding as well as the impulse for life and wealth. Because of the twofold interpretative valence, the incident in the wine cellar could be construed as meaning the shedding of blood as well as the accumulation of wealth. However, when Prokopios recorded the incident in 549, 17 years after it happened, as a digression in Book 7 of the *Wars* he does not suggest the blood interpretation. He avoided any 'scientific' explanation of the event or, as he often does in such cases, any agnostic *caveat*.[6] By 549, Belisarios had returned ignominiously from Italy to settle in Byzantium, a rich man. Set within this context, the incident was perceived as predictive of Belisarios' wealth and Prokopios, making use of the 'strategy of delayed information',[7] registers it when it proves true and consequently he mentions only its auspicious meaning. However, regardless of its placement in the *Wars*, the episode of the wine cellar happened some time between the aftermath of the Nika Riots and the eve of the Libyan campaign, both described as particularly bloody;[8] at that time the inauspicious interpretation of the 'sign' should have prevailed.

---

[4] As stated in *Wars* 7.35.3.

[5] *Wars* 7.35.4–8. The passage is discussed in I. Anagnostakis, *Όταν το κρασί γίνεται πάγος'*, in *Αμπελοοινική Ιστορία στο χώρο της Μακεδονίας και της Θράκης* (Athens, 1998), 187–231, (Fr. summary, 542–3), esp. 198–9 and 210–212 (oenological comment by S. Kourakou); cf. also I. Anagnostakis, 'Paroinia en pourpre: le pouvoir du vin et l'ivresse du pouvoir à Byzance', in *Olio e vino nell'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 2007), 914–15, and I. Anagnostakis, *Ο βυζαντινός οινικός πολιτισμός. Το παράδειγμα της Βιθυνίας* (Athens, 2008), 28–30.

[6] Av. Cameron, 'The "Scepticism" of Prokopios', *Historia* 15 (1966), 475 [repr. in her, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London, 1981), pt. I]: 'he does not always apply this apparent *caveat* to his stories of miraculous happenings, but often reports them as facts'.

[7] Prokopios often places information 'only when it acquires explanatory value' (Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 33). The report of an event, its foretelling or an omen with an interpretation, once the portents are considered to have been proved true, serves Prokopios' narrative purposes, as in the case of the incident-cum-sign of the castrated bull (526–534), which is interpreted as referring to the capture of Rome by the eunuch Narses in 551 (*Wars* 8.21.11–20). See also Cameron, 'The "Scepticism"', 476.

[8] *Wars* 1.24.53–8; *Secret History* 12.12–17 (on the slaughter of the Nika Riots), and *Secret History* 18.4 (on the slaughter of the Vandals).

Again employing the 'strategy of delayed information' and the technique of the twofold interpretative valence, Prokopios discusses in Book V of the *Wars* the oracular utterance (*logion*) *Africa capta Mundus cum nato peribit*, of which he provides two different interpretations. He first claims that it was wrongly associated with the unfavourable atmosphere preceding the Libyan campaign, because of the confusion of the word *mundus* with its Greek translation *kosmos* (= world), thereby reinforcing the eschatological worries of the 530s.[9] In fact, he argues, the utterance did not predict the end of the world after the conquest of Libya/Africa, the defeat and death of the general Mundus and his son during the campaign of 535/6 in Dalmatia, and he accordingly registers it in the relevant section of the *Wars*.[10]

Prokopios records a third event that took place after Justinian's final decision to undertake the Libyan campaign at the time of the departure of the fleet from Constantinople, considered as a bad omen and moreover as casting a curse over the expedition. At the moment when part of the fleet was to set off for the Peloponnese, where they were to await the rest of the troops under the command of Belisarios, something urgent occurred which Justinian imperatively ordered them to attend to. Prokopios ironically notes that the emperor remembered something (*enthymion*) that he wished to enjoin upon them – something that he had wished to say previously, but he had been so busy and his mind so occupied with other things that this subject had been driven out:

> He summoned them, accordingly, intending to say what he wished, but upon considering the matter, he saw that it would not be propitious for them to interrupt their journey ... He therefore sent men to forbid them either to return to him or to disembark from their ships. And these men, upon coming near the ships, commanded them with much shouting and loud cries by no means to turn back, and it seemed to those present that the thing which had happened was no good omen (*oiōnos te einai ouk agathos*) and that never would one of the men in those ships return from Libya to Byzantium.[11]

---

[9] On the sixth-century worries, see P. Magdalino, 'The End of Time in Byzantium', in W. Brandes and F. Schieder (eds), *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Religionen* (Berlin and New York, 2008), 123–4.

[10] *Wars* 5.7.6–8. H. Jackson, 'On an Oracle in Procopius de Bello Gothico I 7', *The Journal of Philology* 30 (1906), 228, renders the phrase as: *Africa capta sedet: Mundus natusque peribit*; cf. also D. Comparetti, 'Maledicenze Procopiane', *Raccolta di scritti in onore di G. Lumbroso* (Milan, 1925), 68–76 (I was unable to consult it), and B. Rubin, *Prokopios von Kaisareia* (Stuttgart, 1954 = *RE* 23.1, 1957), 160 (*peribunt*). On Prokopios' knowledge of Latin Sibylline oracles, see Cameron, *Procopius*, 114, 191–2, 203.

[11] *Wars* 3.11.24–8. I am using the translation of H.B. Dewing, *Procopius* (London, 1961) with some unacknowledged emendations of my own.

The passage adds a further layer to Prokopios' presentation on the conflicted attitude of Justinian at the time of the fleet's departure. At that point, however, he preferred to underline the public fear regarding the outcome of the campaign, but took care to note also that the premonition was misleading (*ouk alēthe euresei ta ex archēs doxanta*). In fact, he adds, the message of 'no return' targeted only 'Stotzas ... who was destined to be an enemy of the emperor, to make an attempt to set up a tyranny, and by no means to return to Byzantium, and one might suppose that curse to have been turned upon him by a *daimonion*'.[12]

It is in this dark context that Prokopios sets the controversy among the Byzantines over the Vandalic War. Apart from the signs, which had a strong effect on the soldiers and the people, the dignitaries of the court and Prokopios himself were opposed to the project of a new war. Only two dreams appear to have been favourable to Justinian's resolution to again take up arms against Libya: one reported by a bishop, another that Prokopios himself had.[13] Below, I shall specifically discuss Prokopios' dream, its literary background and the political subtext of its narrative. However, before turning to the reading of Prokopios' dream, it is necessary to explore the authorial strategy in which the dream is inscribed, a strategy that permeates an important part of the account of the events that preceded the departure of the army to Libya.

Prokopios later writes that he was one of those who took a serious view of the risks of such a war.[14] Yet, at that point he chooses not to discuss his own position; instead, he focuses on the reaction of the Pretorian Prefect, John the Cappadocian, who pronounced a public speech in order to dissuade Justinian from following this perilous plan.[15] Prokopios usually expresses outright hostility to and dislike of John. In another passage, he defines him 'a man of worthless character and so skilful at devising ways of bringing money into the public treasury to the detriment of men'.[16] Yet in this particular context, he presents him as a 'man of the greatest daring and the cleverest of all men of his time', who succeeded in making the emperor reconsider his decision to undertake a war against the Vandals.[17] The approval of John's attitude is probably due to John's opposition to the campaign, an attitude Prokopios shared with the Prefect. It has already been argued that the Prefect's speech 'is modelled in content and context' on Herodotus, more precisely on the speech of Artabanus, who

[12] *Wars* 3.11.29–31.

[13] *Wars* 3.10.18–25; on the run-up to the campaign see *Wars* 3.10–12.

[14] *Wars* 3.12.3.

[15] *Wars* 3.10.7–17.

[16] *Wars* 3.13.12–13.

[17] *Wars* 3.10.7–8: θρασύτατος ὢν καὶ δεινότατος τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν ἁπάντων. See M. Cesa, 'La politica di Giustiniano verso l'occidente nel giudizio di Procopio', *Athenaeum* 5 (1981), 400–401. On John the Cappadocian, see G. Greatrex, 'The Composition of Procopius' Persian Wars and John the Cappadocian', *Prudentia* 27 (1995), 1–13.

endeavoured to dissuade Xerxes from marching on Greece.[18] However, this is not the only place where Prokopios was inspired by the narrative of Herodotus. After repeating the speech of John the Cappadocian, Prokopios provides a counterargument in the form of the dream of an anonymous bishop, who asked to speak to the emperor. The bishop came from the East, met Justinian and announced that he had had a dream in which God asked the emperor to free the Christians in Libya from tyranny, whereupon he would offer him lordship over Libya. Prokopios continues by recording that, having heard him, the emperor could not contain himself any longer and began to prepare the army, fleet and supplies; he also informed Belisarios that he should ready himself to leave for Libya immediately.[19] The bishop's dream, claims Prokopios, was considered to be of divine origin (*chrematismos*) and as such it easily undermined the 'worldly' arguments expressed by the Pretorian Prefect and made Justinian again change his position and finalize his decision.

The dream episode suggests a concealed disapproval of the emperor's inconsistency in policy-making – a well-known narrative strategy in Prokopios.[20] It also implies an indirect criticism of the religious dimension of Justinian's political activity. Indeed, the emperor justified the war against the Vandals on the ground of their Arianism,[21] and the bishop's allegedly divine dream enabled Prokopios to denounce the 'religious propaganda' that supported the campaign. Apart from the political message it conveys, I suggest that the entire narrative of the speech of John the Cappadocian, the ambivalence of Justinian, the bishop's dream and the subsequent dream of Prokopios is inspired by Herodotus' account of the Persian expedition against Greece in 480.

---

[18] R. Scott, 'The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography', in M. Mullett and R. Scott (eds), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham, 1981), 73–4; Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 180.

[19] *Wars* 3.10.18–21. On it, see G. Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat and Spätantik*e (Stuttgart, 2000), 304–6. Cf. Cameron, 'The "Scepticism"', 479 and n. 94; Cameron, *Procopius*, 114–15; J.A.S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London, 1996), 127, 194.

[20] For Prokopios' narrative strategies, see Kaldellis, Procopius, *passim*.

[21] *Novel* 78.4.1. On the issue, see M. Maas, 'Roman History and Christian Ideology in Justinianic Reform Legislation', *DOP* 40 (1986), 25. I was unable to consult A. Rodolfi, 'Procopius and the Vandals: How the Byzantine Propaganda constructs and changes African Identity', in M.G. Berndt and R. Steinacher (eds), *Das Reich der Vandalen und seine (Vor) Geschichte* (Vienna, 2008), 233–42. As in other instances, Prokopios prefers not to directly use religious or ecclesiastical terminology, an attitude that creates doubts about his religious beliefs. For other examples and on Prokopios' technique for distancing himself from Christian vocabulary, see Cameron, 'The "Scepticism"', 470–471. See also Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 165, and M. Whitby, 'Religious Views of Procopius and Agathias', in D. Brodka and M. Stachura (eds), *Continuity and Change in Late Antique Historiography* (Cracow, 2007), 73–93.

In introducing the narrative of the expedition, Herodotus narrates how Mardonius, who had been defeated in 490, incited Xerxes to undertake an expedition against Greece and how Artabanus, the king's advisor, opposed such a project. While Xerxes was reconsidering his decision under the influence of Artabanus' speech, a dream twice encouraged him to mount the campaign. Upset by the dream, Xerxes sought advice from Artabanus, who replied that such dreams are insignificant, generated by the thoughts of the day and that the dream's divine origin could only be tested if the same one occurred a third time. Thereupon, Artabanus donned the king's attire, sat on the throne, fell asleep and had the same dream. Persuaded now of its divine origin, Artabanus reckoned that the expedition was divinely enjoined.[22] But a last dream that occurred during the military preparations – Xerxes' third dream – the contents of which I shall discuss below, served as the model for Prokopios' own dream.

In constructing the 'dream sequence', Herodotus exploited an important aspect of oneirology: the repetition of the same dream marks its truthfulness and proves its divine origin. He also used the theme of 'the king's dream before the campaign', which had acquired an exceptional status in Greek literature after *Iliad* 2.79–83.[23] In both Homer and Herodotus, a key role for the dream's interpretation and impact on the dreamer is played by the king's senior advisors, Nestor and Artabanus respectively.

Herodotus' text provided Prokopios with the literary model for his own narrative though he made necessary adjustments to the story. He attributed the function of Artabanus, the 'senior advisor of the king', to John the Cappadocian. He followed Herodotus in discussing the impact of John's oration on Justinian, which persuaded the emperor to revise his initial decision, just as Artabanus' discourse momentarily dissuaded Xerxes from marching against Greece. The dream factor is an essential component of the development of the narrative's plot in Herodotus and Prokopios. However, Prokopios deviates from his model's account: instead of the 'king's dream', the truthfulness of which is tested in Herodotus by its triple occurrence, Prokopios opted for two separate dreams, seen by two individuals neither of whom is the emperor or his 'official' advisor.

---

[22] Herodotus 7.12–18. On Artabanus' interpretation of the dreams of Xerxes, to which Freud refers in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as well as on how Artabanus and Xerxes tested their dreams, see T. Harrison, *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2000), 133–5 (with bibliography). From the bibliography on the series of Xerxes-Artabanus dreams, see H.A. Gartner, 'Les rêves de Xerxes et d'Artabane', *Ktema* 8 (1983), 11–18; Harrison, *Divinity and History*, 122–57; F. Sirois, *Le rêve, objet énigmatique: la démonstration freudienne* (Quebec, 2004), 137–93; A. Hollmann, 'The Manipulation of Signs in Herodotos' Histories', *TAPhA* 135/2 (2005), 279–327; E. Baragwanath, *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus* (Oxford and New York, 2008), 240–253.

[23] On the biblical and Homeric use of the theme in narratives of Roman emperors' dreams before the war, see the discussion of Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen*, 245–312.

The alternative he chose served Prokopios' narrative strategy that relies on the contrast between the 'rational' discourse of John the Cappadocian and the 'irrational', the alleged *chrematismos* of the bishop's dream. Justinian seems to have been manipulated by a man of religion and, moreover, by a dream that could simply originate in 'the thoughts of the day', as Artabanus interpreted the first two of Xerxes' dreams. Thus Prokopios intentionally, though in indirect terms, expressed his disapproval of the emperor, as he does in several instances throughout the *Wars*.

Within the narrative context of the *Vandalic War*, the bishop's dream stands at a crucial moment and functions as a turning point of the plot, inciting Justinian to mobilize and strengthen his resolution to prepare for war. Likewise, Prokopios' dream, placed after the account discussed above, namely the ominous communiqué transmitted by the imperial emissaries to the fleet, denotes the author's *volte-face* from a rather critical stance towards the plans of Justinian and justifies his decision to accompany Belisarios. The account of the dream runs thus:

> In the seventh year of Justinian's reign ... the emperor commanded the general's ship to anchor off the point which is before the royal palace. Thither came also Epiphanius, the chief priest of the city and after uttering an appropriate prayer he put on the ships one of the soldiers who had lately been baptized and taken the Christian name. And after this, the general Belisarios and Antonina, his wife, set sail. And there was with them also Prokopios, who wrote this history; now he had been exceedingly terrified at the danger, but later he had seen a vision in his sleep which caused him to take courage and made him eager to go on the expedition. For it seemed in the dream that he was in the house of Belisarios, and one of the servants entering announced that some men had come bearing gifts; and Belisarios bade him investigate what sort of gifts they were, and he went out into the court and saw men who carried on their shoulders earth with the flowers and all. And he bade him bring these men into the house and deposit the earth they were carrying in the portico; and Belisarios together with his guardsmen came there, and he himself reclined on that earth and ate of the flowers, and urged the others to do likewise; and as they reclined and ate, as if upon a couch, the food seemed to them exceedingly sweet. Such, then, was the vision of the dream.[24]

From a literary viewpoint, this dream narrative essentially differs from other, similar accounts that are recorded by Prokopios.[25] First, Prokopios offers here

[24] *Wars* 3.12.1–5.

[25] Eleven dreams are recorded in the whole œuvre: five in the *Wars* (2.22.13–14; 2.26.12; 3.10.19; 3.12.3–5; 3.21.17–25), two in the *Buildings* (2.2.10; 2.3.3–15),

his only personal experience of a dream throughout his œuvre; second, like the bishop's dream, his dream marks a turning point in both the development of the *Vandalic War* and the political activities of its heroes; third, the dream is artfully symbolic unlike the easily decipherable dream of the bishop, yet still no interpretation is provided; fourth, the account is detailed unlike the other historical, symbolic, prophetic or demonic dreams Prokopios records elsewhere.[26]

Indeed, Prokopios regularly confines dream accounts to a limited a number of elements which allows him to simply summarize their message. Moreover, in other historical dreams, Prokopios does not comment on them or provide any interpretation; it has, therefore, been suggested that this omission of any interpretation is due to the effortless decoding of them not only by the audience of the time, but also by any subsequent Byzantine audience, precisely because of the historical circumstances and the context of the narrative.[27] Hence, readers of Prokopios' dream could easily understand that the sweetest gifts were to be offered to Belisarios and his companions, that a land with sweet flowers and fruits would straightforwardly be given to him and anyone could identify this wonderful place with Libya, for which the army was about to sail.

Although Artemidoros' manual can be used to interpret other dreams recorded by Prokopios, it proved to be of no help in this particular case.[28] Furthermore, I consider this outstanding example of literary, symbolic dream record, which is permeated by allusive intertextuality, to be part of Prokopios' authorial agenda. Therefore, for decoding it, a literary perspective proved to be more appropriate than an oneirocritical one; literary analysis also enables the reader to grasp the dream's complexity.

---

and four in the *Secret History* (3.3.27–28; 6.6.5–9; 6.12.31–32; 6.19.1–17). In the whole of his work Prokopios uses the terms ὄναρ-ὀνείρου 35 times, ὄψις ὀνείρου 17 times, and ὕπαρ once (*Wars* 2.22.13-14). On dream terminology in ancient literature, see M. Casevitz, 'Les mots du rêve en grec ancien', *Ktema* 7 (1982), 67–73; M.R. Fernandez Garrido and M.A Vinagre Lobo, 'La Terminología Griega para Sueño y Soñar', *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica* 13 (2003), 69–104.

[26] An exceptionally detailed account is given in the *Secret History*; it involves Justinian swallowing the sea. On it, see G.T. Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο στο τέλος της αρχαιότητας: Η *Χρονογραφία* του Μαλάλα και τα *Ανέκδοτα* του Προκοπίου', in D. Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου. Η χρήση των ονείρων στην ελληνική και ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα* (Herakleion, 1993), 306–9.

[27] Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο', 308.

[28] Neither Artemidoros or any other dreambook contain a lemma on the expression ἄνθη ἐσθίειν (to eat flowers). I also received a negative response from other participants at the conference to my request for information on this point. In Artemidoros and Achmet's dreambooks, fruits feature food (for example apples, figs, mulberries, quince, dates) and are interpreted according to the season or the colour of the fruit as well as how ripe and sweet they are.

Prokopios' dream may be interpreted in two different ways. As the *Wars* was a public work, a first-level, auspicious interpretation would be satisfactory: an entire land, easily identifiable with Libya, and its sweet flowers would effortlessly be offered to the Byzantines. Later in the *Vandalic War*, Prokopios suggests such an interpretation.[29] However, some 15 or 17 years later, in the unpublished *Secret History* he revised the account of the Libyan campaign in the *Vandalic War*. I have already noted that Prokopios omitted to comment on the details of the dream; instead, he comes around to accepting the imperial decision by taking part in the controversial expedition. However, a thorough analysis of the dream reveals that it contains traces of the author's sustained criticism of imperial policy, a critique wrapped up in a very artful *caveat*. As mentioned above, parts of the *Vandalic War*, especially the preparation against Libya, are modelled on Herodotus' account of Xerxes' preparations for attacking Greece. In literary terms Prokopios' dream functions in a similar way and refers to Xerxes' third dream as recounted by Herodotus:

> Xerxes was now intent on the expedition and then saw a third vision in his sleep, which the Magi interpreted to refer to the whole earth and to signify that all men should be his slaves. This was the vision: Xerxes thought that he was crowned with an olive bough, of which the shoots spread over the whole earth, and then the crown vanished from off his head where it was set. The Magi interpreted it in this way, and immediately every single man of the Persians who had been assembled rode away to his own province and there used all zeal to fulfil the king's command, each desiring to receive the promised gifts. Thus it was that Xerxes mustered his army, searching out every part of the continent.[30]

Herodotus used the homeric device of 'Agamemnon' dream and Prokopios modelled his own dream on Herodotus and Homer. Xerxes' and Prokopios' dreams differ in imagery but are similar in their twofold interpretative valence. Xerxes' dream clearly was an ominous one for it signalled that the king's ambitions to rule Greece, the land of the olive, would quickly vanish. However, the Persian Magi chose to give to it an auspicious meaning, by discarding its conclusion. An auspicious interpretation could also be generated if one opts for a positive decoding of Prokopios' dream although, as I shall suggest below, its content might point in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, both dreams rely on floral elements: olive branches in Xerxes' dream, whereas earth and flowers are offered up as a gift in Prokopios' dream. Furthermore, both dreams contain similar keywords: bear or carry/receive (*ferein*/*labein*) earth and gifts (*gēn*, *dōra*).

---

[29] See below, p. 92, n. 54 and 55.

[30] Herodotus, 7.19. English translation by A.D. Godley, *Herodotus with an English Translation* (Cambridge, MA, 1920).

In both dreams, products of the earth – flowers, fruits – are wrapped around the head or brought on shoulders and offered as gifts, or gifts are promised. Finally, it is worth noting that both dream narratives precede the recounting of parallel campaigns.

Previous scholarship assumed that Prokopios employed the term 'flower' in the sense of fruit and translated the passage accordingly.[31] However, I believe that here Prokopios intentionally used Homer and chose the word 'flowers' to designate a kind of sweet flower, which, according to the Homeric tradition, makes those who taste them forget their homeland and never come back. Thus, he expressed the fears he shared with many others in Constantinople about the outcome of the expedition against the Vandals and the dread of 'no return' that the soldiers had.

I surmise that besides Herodotus, Prokopios also used Homer and he arranged his two sources as to make them conform to his authorial program.[32] In *Odyssey* 9.80–102, Homer recounts that, when Odysseus and his companions were at sea off cape Malea and Kythera, the north wind drove them on for nine days until on the tenth day it led them to 'the land of the Lotus-eaters, who eat a flowery food'. The Lotus-eaters offered Odysseus' companions the opportunity to taste the 'honey-sweet fruit of the lotus'. Those who ate thereof 'had no longer any wish to bring back word or to return, but there they were fain to abide among the Lotus-eaters, feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of their homeward way'. The expression 'you have eaten of the lotus' (*lōtou ephages*) became a proverb, which was said of 'those who forget their country and stay a long time abroad'.[33] Although the flower of the Homeric episode has been variously interpreted in ancient literature – melilot, herbs, tender shoots, fruits, even trees[34] – 'flowery food' usually suggested a specific flower, the lotus, the water plant with which guests at symposia were crowned and so, by extension, according to Hesychios, 'every flower'.[35] Homer does not locate the wondrous land of the Lotus-eaters, but geographers, from as early as Herodotus' time, identified it with Libya and

[31] Cameron, *Procopius*, 17: 'he saw a gift brought to Belisarios in his own house – the earth blooming with fruits, and Belisarios lying on it and eating the fruits and inviting the members of his bodyguard to do the same, as though they were lying on a bed'. Dewing, *Procopius*, vol. 2, 111–3, translates ἄνθη as 'flowers'.

[32] Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 13.

[33] *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, ed. E. Leutsch and F.G. Schneidewin, vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1851; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), 515

[34] H. Lamer, 'Lotophagen', and A. Steier, 'Lotos 2', *RE* 13.2, 1507–14, 1515–32. A. Touwaide, 'The Jujube Tree in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Case Study in the Methodology of Textual Archeobotany', in P. Dendle and A. Touwaide (eds), *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden* (Woodbridge, 2008), 72–100.

[35] Hesychius, *Lexicon*, ed. K. Latte, *Hesychii Alexandrini lexicon*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen, 1966), letter λ 1527.

more precisely with the hinterland of Little Syrtis and the islands of Meninx and Cercinna, which they designated as the 'lands' and 'islands' of the Lotus-eaters.[36] Strabo, for example, claims that the island of 'Meninx is regarded as the land of the Lotus-eaters mentioned by Homer and certain tokens of this are pointed out, namely an altar of Odysseus and the fruit itself; for the tree which is called the lotus abounds in the island, and its fruit is delightful'.[37] In one of his epigrams, the fourth-century poet Palladas, writes: 'He came from the land of the Lotus-eaters', referring to someone who came from Africa, that country of forgetfulness.[38] In addition, a series of Roman and early Byzantine depictions on coins and mosaics, which present the personification of Carthage in the form of a female figure crowned with flowers and holding a bouquet, reinforce the image of Carthage – and by extension Libya, also known as Africa – as a prosperous and blooming land.[39] The representation is modelled on the mosaic, ivory and textile depiction of the Gaia/Earth holding or surrounded by fruits and lotus flowers.[40]

Three months after the departure, in September 533, Belisarios' army, having passed by Cape Malea and Methone on the western tip of the Peloponnese and then Sicily, landed in the region of the alleged Lotus-eaters, slightly above Cercinna at Capud Vada.[41] Like Odysseus and his companions, they immediately sought water upon their arrival in the land of the Lotus-eaters.[42] The Byzantines were immediately confronted by an extraordinary occurrence, a miraculous sign (*thaumasion symbolon*): they found an abundance of water in the desert landscape once they dug a well, and the event presaged an easy victory over the Vandals, Prokopios argued to Belisarios.[43] Belisarios' ships followed a route that would vividly remind a scholar of that of Odysseus; they arrived in Libya, the

[36] Dionysios Periegetes, *Orbis terrae descriptio*, ed. K. Brodersen, *Dionysios von Alexandria. Das Lied von der Welt,* (Hildesheim and New York, 1994), verses 195–207, 477–80; cf. Eustathius of Thessalonike, *Commentarium in Dionysii periegetae orbis descriptionem*, ed. K. Müller, *Geographi Graeci minores*, vol. 2 (Paris 1861; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), 252, 307–8. Cf. also Lamer, 'Lotophagen', 1514.

[37] Strabo 17.3.17, ed. H.L. Jones, *The Geography of Strabo with an English translation*, vol. 8 (Cambridge, MA and London 1970). Strabo 3.4.3–4, taking as an example the geographical location of the Lotus-eaters, who inhabit the islands of Little Syrtis and Meninx, writes of 'some [who], having believed in these stories themselves and also in the wide learning of the poet, have actually turned the poetry of Homer to their use as a basis of scientific investigations' (πρὸς ἐπιστημονικὰς ὑποθέσεις ἔτρεψαν τὴν Ὁμήρου ποίησιν).

[38] *Greek Anthology* 11.284. R. Aubreton, *Anthologie Grecque*, vol. 10 (Paris, 1972), 274, notes: 'c'est un Africain de cette terre de l'oubli'.

[39] F.M. Clover, 'Felix Karthago', *DOP* 40 (1986), 3–5, 9 and fig. 6a.

[40] H. Maguire, 'The Mantle of Earth', *Illinois Classical Studies* 12 (1987), [repr. in his, *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art* (Aldershot, 1998), pt. VII], 221–8.

[41] *Wars* 3.14.17.

[42] *Odyssey* 9.83–5.

[43] *Wars* 3.15.31–5; cf. Cameron, 'The "Scepticism"', 475 and n. 69.

land known to Herodotus for its population of Lotus-eaters.[44] The episode of the finding of water provided a supplementary reason to believe in an auspicious outcome for the expedition, and a further parallel to the Homeric text. Yet the double-edged floral gifts of the dream could be understood either as the sweet gifts of victory and the conquest of a blooming land, which offers itself up to be eaten, or as the Homeric delicious lotuses that cause forgetfulness and the dread of not being able to return home.

Prokopios does not identify the 'edible flowers' of his dream with the lotus or Libya with the land of the Lotus-eaters. Therefore, at a first-level interpretation of the dream, the whole setting and the 'flower' imagery it contains would follow the Roman iconographic tradition and suggest the victory of the Byzantine army and the offering of the conquered land to the empire. Nevertheless, at a second-level interpretation, which would rely on a Homeric reading of the dream, the tasting of the lotus flowers would signify forgetfulness and would verify the omens, that 'never would one of the men in those ships return from Libya to Byzantium'. In narrating his dream, Prokopios drew additional material from *Iliad* (9.542: *autois anthesi*): to designate Libya, the prosperous land to which both Odysseus and Belisarios were forced by external powers to sail, he employed the key expression '*gēn autois anthesi*'.

It is, of course, unknowable whether Prokopios actually had such a dream on the eve of the fleet's departure, although 'dreams are for the most part the thoughts of the day'.[45] A careful choice of quotations and symbols, such as the Homeric 'flowery land' that is offered to Belisarios, the 'flower food', and the 'flowers [whereof] they ate', allowed interpretations to remain open, like the outcome of the campaign against Libya.

Although he states so, it is hard to believe that a dream of this kind would have convinced Prokopios to follow Belisarios. If there really was a dream, it is possible to assume that he made public its auspicious interpretation, keeping to himself the unpleasant symbolism of lotuses and Lotus-eaters until some more appropriate time. Nevertheless in June 533 the lotus-eating version of the dream would be entirely in tune with Prokopios' negative view of the campaign. At that time, he must have considered that those who obeyed Belisarios' orders to eat the flowers with him were to take part in a journey of no return – they would become 'forgetful of their homeward way'. The campaign could bring wealth, but it could also be a one-way trip. In the *Vandalic War*, Prokopios uses the *caveat* of his 'agnosticism' to insulate himself against and appear indifferent to almost all omens and signs.[46] Indeed, before even recording his dream, and as if

[44] Herodotus, 4, 177–8.

[45] As argued by Artabanus in Herodotus 7.16.

[46] *Wars* 3.11.31: ἀφίημι ἐκάστῳ ὅπη ἄν τις βούληται ἐκλογίζεσθαι; cf. above, p. 80. Cameron, 'The "Scepticism"', 475–76, disagrees with Rubin, who considers it an evidence of

trying to bias any interpretation of the portents of Justinian's supposed curse, he had declared that, 'if anyone should so interpret the supposed curse ... he will find its original interpretation untrue'.[47] I believe that this phrase included the dream as well and, therefore, is of strategic importance to the whole narrative. In my view, just as there had been a first interpretation of the incident in the wine cellar, the oracle of the Sibyl and Justinian's curse, there must have been an equally inauspicious, first interpretation of Prokopios' dream.

Some elements of the original interpretations, the *ex archēs doxanta*, are rendered in a veiled fashion in the account of the *Vandalic War*, but it is the *Secret History* that sheds light on the puzzling portents and dreams at the time of the fleet's departure and allows insights into the change of Prokopios' political views.[48] Therefore, I believe that the intentional ambiguity of the dream reveals the author's diplomatic stance; important elements of the dream are further developed in a different way in the *Vandalic War* and particularly in the *Secret History*. For example, the image of the 'food' offered to Belisarios and his bodyguards in the form of flowers recurs in a metaphorical expression in the *Vandalic War* for the children of Libya itself: 'God had sent the Vandals to them (*sc*. to the Byzantine army) as ready food (*etoimon brōsin*) ... and they (*sc*. the Vandals)... were all disgracefully destroyed'.[49] As the operations in Libya unfold in the narrative, despite the constant, underlying criticism, and allusions of Prokopios, elements of the auspicious version of the dream are presented in order to justify his dreaming of Belisarios and his bodyguards in a state of bliss on a couch.[50] Prokopios' dream image, which had Belisarios reclining 'as if upon a couch' and the land of the Vandals offered to him as a gift conforms to a reading of the *Vandalic War* that sets forth the importance of *Tych*ē in Prokopios' account; it has been argued Prokopios considered the outcome of the campaign a matter of chance, Belisarios being 'as if upon a couch' simply 'lucky'.[51] Within this context, the dream narrative is constructed in such a highly diplomatic fashion as to point at different interpretations in accordance with Prokopios' diverse political judgments.

Prokopios' agnosticism; on the contrary, she believes the phrase to be a *caveat*, a Herodotean formula or affected, Herodotean rationalism. But see also Kaldellis, *Procopius*, *passim*.

[47] *Wars* 3.11.29–30: καὶ εἰ μὲν τις αὐτὰ ... ξυμβάλλοιτο, οὐκ ἀληθῆ εὑρήσει τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς δόξαντα.

[48] Cesa, 'La politica di Giustiniano', 389–409; Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 236 n. 23, does not agree with Cameron, *Procopius*, 137ff., 188ff., 230, who argues that Prokopios gave his wholehearted support to Byzantine imperialism.

[49] *Wars* 3.18.18–19: ὡς ὁ θεὸς σφίσιν ἕτοιμον βρῶσιν τοὺς ξένους τούσδε πέμψειεν. οὕτω ... οἱ Βανδίλοι ... ἅπαντες αἰσχρῶς διεφθάρησαν.

[50] *Wars* 3.12.3–5.

[51] Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 177–89; cf. Whitby, 'Religious Views of Procopius and Agathias' (as above, n. 21), 73–93.

In the *Secret History*, I propose, Prokopios presents an interpretation of his lotus-eating dream that underlines its ominous aspects. With rhetorical hyperbole, he claims that Justinian was responsible for the deaths of millions of people:

> It would be easier to number all the grains of sand than those whom this emperor killed ... I would say that ten thousand times ten thousand died. For example, North Africa has been so devastated that, despite its size, it would be difficult and noteworthy to find anyone else there even if one were to traverse miles of road.[52]

He also affirms that, though he was himself an eyewitness to what happened in Libya, it was not easy for him to estimate the death toll, but the lives lost there, both locals and Romans, might number five million: 'if one were to claim that five hundred times ten thousand human beings were lost in North Africa, he would not, I believe, even be coming close to the truth of the matter'.[53] Moreover, reinforcing the 'original opinion' recorded in the *Wars* that 'never would one of the men in those ships return from Libya to Byzantium'[54] and alluding to the lotus-eating symbolism of his dream, he writes point-blank in the *Secret History*: 'The earth there lies upon a host of Roman soldiers and those who had followed them there from Byzantium'.[55]

The land of Libya, this land of oblivion and death, which was offered up 'as if upon a couch' to the Byzantines with its lotus flowers as food in Prokopios' dream would eternally cover those who followed the will of Justinian. It was indeed an accursed campaign, Prokopios concludes, because Justinian, having sidelined Belisarios, wanted to 'swallow it [Libya] up through plunder'.[56] Could

---

[52] *Secret History* 18.4–5: θᾶσσον γὰρ ἄν τις, οἶμαι, τὴν πᾶσαν ψάμμον ἐξαριθμήσειεν ἢ ὅσους ὁ βασιλεὺς οὗτος ἀνῄρηκε. τὴν δὲ χώραν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον διαριθμούμενος, ἥνπερ ἔρημον τῶν ἐνοικούντων ξυμπέπτωκεν εἶναι, μυριάδας μυριάδων μυρίας φημὶ ἀπολωλέναι. Λιβύη μὲν γὰρ ἐς τοσοῦτον διήκουσα μέτρον οὕτως ἀπόλωλεν ὥστε ὁδὸν ἰόντι πολλὴν ἀνδρὶ ἐντυχεῖν χαλεπόν τε καὶ λόγου ἄξιον εἶναι. Engl. trans. A. Kaldellis, *Procopius, The Secret History with Related Texts* (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 2010), 81.

[53] *Secret History* 18.18.8: εἴ τις μυριάδας ἀνθρώπων ἔν γε Λιβύῃ πεντακοσίας ἰσχυρίζεται ἀπολωλέναι, οὐκ ἄν ποτε τῷ πράγματι, οἶμαι, διαρκῶς εἴποι; on it, see Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 54, 81; cf. Cameron, *Procopius*, 62.

[54] *Wars* 3.11.28–9: οὔποτε τῶν ἐν ταῖς ναυσὶν ἐκείναις τινὰ ἐκ Λιβύης ἐς Βυζάντιον ἐπανήξειν.

[55] *Secret History* 18.18.8: πολλοὺς δὲ αὖ καὶ Ῥωμαίων στρατιωτῶν καὶ τῶν αὐτοῖς ἐκ Βυζαντίου ἐπισπομένων ἡ γῆ ἔκρυψεν; Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 81.

[56] *Secret History* 9.9. Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 81, 87–9. Cameron, *Procopius*, 62 and 172, considers the passage a 'far more solidly based critique of the government policy in Africa than anything in the *Wars*'. Again in the *Secret History* (18.18.1–3) Prokopios,

an exploration of oneiric voracity, either in the eating of flowers, the swallowing of the Bosporos (as in another famous dream of the *Secret History*) or even of the whole of Libya, perhaps lead us to yet unsuspected allusions and to more straightforward dream interpretations?

* * *

Such a reading of the dream seems to over-interpret Prokopios' calculating motives when he recorded the departure of the fleet in 533, to overstate his cautious attitude when he concealed events and their implications in the *Wars*, which he openly discusses only in the *Secret History*. However, recent research has shown that this cautious attitude is part of Prokopios' authorial identity.[57] A minor detail introduced before the dream narrative in the *Wars* that, to my knowledge, has not yet been discussed, provides supplementary evidence in support of my hypotheses.

As already mentioned, in recounting the blessing of the fleet before the departure for Libya and narrating his dream, Prokopios notes that the patriarch 'put on the ship one of the soldiers who had lately been baptized and had taken the Christian name', and, he continues, 'after this the general and Antonina, his wife, set sail'.[58] At this point of the *Wars*, Prokopios is again omitting pieces of information that he later records in the *Secret History*. He explicitly admits this himself in a passage of the *Secret History* when stating that: 'Moreover, I was forced to conceal the causes of many of the events that I narrated in earlier books. It is therefore incumbent on me here to reveal what I had previously concealed as well as to disclose the causes of those events that I did report there'.[59] Elsewhere he states that 'there is only one fact concerning the love of Antonina that I covered up in that account out of fear'.[60]

What he had concealed in the passage of the *Wars* is revealed in the *Secret History*. There he recounts in detail Antonina's ten-year affair with

---

referring to Justinian's insatiability and his squandering of the wealth of the empire, mentions a dream someone had in which the emperor was seen to drink the whole of the Bosporos: Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο', 307–8.

[57] On this particular authorial attitude of Prokopios', see Cameron, *Procopius*, 9, 137ff., and Kaldellis, *Procopius*, *passim*.

[58] *Wars* 3.12.2.

[59] *Secret History* 1.3: πολλῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις εἰρημένων ἀποκρύψασθαι τὰς αἰτίας ἠναγκάσθην τὰ [τό] τε [δ'] οὖν τέως ἄρρητα μείναντα καὶ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν δεδηλωμένων ἐνταῦθά μοι τοῦ λόγου τὰς αἰτίας σημῆναι δεήσει. See Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 3; cf. Cameron, *Procopius*, 9, 51, 73. The earlier suggestion that this passage is an interpolation was again championed by K. Adshead, 'The Secret History of Procopius and its Genesis', *Byzantion* 73 (1993), 8 n. 15.

[60] *Secret History* 2.2.16: τοῦτό μοι τῷ δέει σεσιώπηται μόνον; Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 11.

Theodosios, Belisarios' and her own adopted son, pointing up the weakness of her husband, and a probable parallel with Justinian and Theodora.[61] Therefore what Prokopios put most elliptically and expressed in obscure fashion in the *Wars*, was overtly developed into a romance in the *Secret History*.[62] The example allows us to assert that the 'lotus-eating' dream was handled in a similar way. In the *Wars*, Prokopios was obliged to keep quiet about, to distort, disguise or only suggest by means of classical allusions the authentic content of his personal dream, out of fear.

How many would have been in a position to decipher Prokopios' dream in his days? Most probably as many as can nowadays understand the Lotus-Eaters' episode of James Joyce's Ulysses with the flower imagery of Bloom, Henry Flower and Moly. Prokopios' œuvre may share the fate of interpretations of James Joyce's book, with which it has so much in common as regards the use of allusions and the intertextual nature of both narratives, so crucial to an understanding of 'The Lotus-Eaters, this land of dreams'.[63]

This unique lotus-eating dream, which Prokopios presents as his own, together with its double-edged interpretation, can be seen not just as revealing evidence of a veiled opposition, but can be studied for its literary politics and contextual strategies. Despite his initial reservations, Prokopios was among those who were not 'covered by the earth of Libya'. As he puts it in the closing clause of the *Secret History*, 'whoever will be lucky enough to have survived that long will know the truth'.[64] Years after the completion of the expedition, 'he felt himself lucky enough', because the campaigns offered him all the flowers and fruits that he could dream of. They also offered him the chance to masterfully narrate but also to disagree secretly or openly, as he saw fit, with the dreams of world domination of the voracious Emperor Justinian.

---

[61] *Secret History* 1.15–18. See also Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 6–7; cf. Cameron, *Procopius*, 70–72. On Prokopios' 'Milesian Tale', the love story involving Antonina, Belisarios and Theodosios, see Adshead, 'The Secret History', 7–10.

[62] The two passages (*Wars* 3.12.2 and *Secret History* 1.16) are not jointly discussed nor are the *dramatis personae* identified by J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire. III A.D. 527–641* (Cambridge 1992), vol. III.A, s.v. 'Antonina 1', 91–3, and III.B, *s.v.* 'Theodosius 8', 1291. They are mentioned by Rubin, *Prokopios von Kaisareia* (as above, n. 10), 136, and B. Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Iustinians II* (Berlin and New York, 1995), 17–18. Kaldellis, *The Secret History,* 6 n. 16, does not identify the soldier of *Wars* 3, 12 with Theodosios and claims that 'other soldiers were baptized at the embarkation ceremony'.

[63] P.F. Herring, 'Lotus-Eaters', in C. Hart and D. Hayman (eds), *James Joyce's 'Ulysses'. Critical Essays* (Berkeley, 1974), 71–89; W.M. Schutte, 'An Index of Recurrent Elements in Ulysses: Lotus Eaters', *James Joyce Quarterly* 14 (1977), 198–218; J.P. Estman, 'The Language of Flowers: A New Source for Lotus Eaters', *James Joyce Quarterly* 26 (1989), 379–96.

[64] *Secret History* 30.30 and 30.34; Kaldellis, *The Secret History*, 132. Cf. P. Rousseau, 'Procopius's Buildings and Justinian's Pride', *Byzantion* 68 (1998), 130.

Chapter 7

Dream Narratives in the *Continuation of Theophanes*

George T. Calofonos

> … it was also his mother's vision (*opsis*) that filled him with fear. And when she had related it to him, he didn't make much of it, but now it was gnawing at his soul. For while she was in the Church of Blachernai, a young woman (a virgin) appeared to her, surrounded by a large group of people clad in white, and all of the church was filled with blood. And this girl asked one of her attendants to fill a large bowl with the blood and offer it to Leo's mother to drink. And when she put up as an excuse the fact that she was a widow of many years, and she had no use for the bowl since she was abstaining from meat or any food containing blood, the young girl shouted at her angrily: 'Then why doesn't your son stop filling me with blood, thus enraging my own son and God?' Since then, Leo's mother had beseeched her son many times to abandon the heresy of Iconoclasm, and had related this vision to him.[1]

The recipient of this horrific vision is the pious mother of a heretic. Her frightened son, whom the vision concerns, is the instigator of the second Iconoclasm, Emperor Leo V. The place is Constantinople, and the time when this vision started to haunt him is this characteristic point in a Byzantine chronicle's narrative, when ill omens start accumulating, marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new one.[2] The vision's ominous power is further enhanced in the narrative by the infallible prediction of a certain monk in the past, that 'an old comrade, Michael, would also become emperor one day'.[3]

---

[1] *Theophanes Continuatus* (henceforth: *TheophCont*) 1.23, ed. I. Bekker, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus* (Bonn, 1838), 36.12–37.3. My translation. Dream narrative no. 1 in the Appendix below, p. 122.

[2] The dream is accompanied by more alarming signs: (1) a prediction derived from the illustrated book containing the *Sibylline Oracles* kept in the imperial library, which included the portraits of future emperors, (2) a second dream (discussed below) and (3) the old forgotten prophecy of the monk at Philomelion. *TheophCont* 1.22 and 1.24, ed. Bekker, 35.20–36.11 and 37.8–9.

[3] At this point in the narrative, the prophecy of the monk at Philomelion is only referred to. The full version of the story is given before: *TheophCont* 1.2–3 and 1.15, ed. Bekker, 6.13–8.17 and 26.9–28.15.

Leo has Michael put safely behind bars, but then has a dream himself, which arouses his fear even more. The dead Iconophile Patriarch Tarasios, who had been deposed and persecuted by Leo, appears in his sleep one night, urging someone named Michael to strike a fatal blow to Leo and throw him off a cliff into an abyss. Awakened by this dream and not being able to go back to sleep, the emperor starts wandering around the dark corridors of the imperial palace and reaches the rooms of the palace's 'keeper of the keys' (*papias*).[4] Through an open door he sees his old friend Michael, supposedly a prisoner, sleeping on the keeper's bed, while his trusted official is sleeping next to Michael, on the floor. Although his grim future is clear to him, the heretic emperor does nothing. Paralysed by his irrational fear, he is unable to take any immediate action, and this leads to his downfall and the inevitable ascent of Michael II to the throne.[5]

This impressive story of blood and betrayal comes from the compilation of tenth-century historical works known to us by the name *The Continuation of Theophanes*. In this chapter I shall look at the ways in which such stories function within the *Continuation*, and the ways by which they were understood at the time. This analysis is part of a wider investigation of the use of dreams in Byzantine historiography.[6] I call such stories '*dream* narratives', although they sometimes include reports of experiences and phenomena we tend to understand today as visions or ecstasy – as is obviously the case with the story of Leo's mother described above. I have argued elsewhere that 'both visions and dreams were thought in Antiquity and Byzantium to belong to the same mode of perception: they were normally classed "dreaming", with visions sometimes occupying the top level of hierarchical classifications of dream types'.[7]

Historical dreams are of course literary creations. Most often they are copies or adaptations of other literary dreams, and even if there was initially a core of reality, a real dream around which they developed, in most cases it is either irrevocably lost under layers upon layers of revisions and elaborations, or made irrelevant

---

[4] The *papias* of the Great Palace was a middle Byzantine official in charge of the keys of the palace, as well as of the palace prison, and therefore held an important role in matters of security. He was also head of maintenance of the palace's buildings. The office of the *papias* was held by a eunuch. See A.P. Kazhdan, 'Papias', in *ODB* 3, 1580, with references to secondary literature.

[5] *TheophCont* 1.24, ed. Bekker, 37.4–38.6; dream narrative no. 2 in the Appendix below p. 122.

[6] Cf. G.T. Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο στο τέλος της αρχαιότητας', in D.I. Kyrtatas (ed.), *ὄψις ἐννυπνίου: Χρήσεις των ονείρων στην αρχαιότητα* (Herakleion, 1993), 283–322, and Calofonos, 'Dream Narratives in Historical Writing: Making Sense of History in Theophanes' *Chronographia*', in R. Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Farnham, 2010), 133–44.

[7] See Calofonos, 'Dream Narratives' (as above, n. 6), 132.

by the literary context. It is not their authenticity or originality, therefore, that makes them interesting, but their effectiveness within the wider narratives to which they belong, as well as their potential as narratives in their own right. Furthermore, even though literary dream narratives do not stand for the 'real' dreaming experience, they do refer meaningfully to a whole range of practices and beliefs pertaining to the dreaming experience and rendering it meaningful.

On the one hand, Byzantine dreaming had incorporated well-established ancient practices, such as the art of dream divination or oneirocriticism, which involves the symbolic interpretation of dreams, the religious practice of incubation, wherein miraculous dreams are ritually evoked mainly for curative purposes, or even the profound spiritual experiences of theophany or hierophany. Although such antique pagan practices were met inevitably with distrust by the new Christian religion, they had survived through a long process of Christianization. On the other hand, Byzantine dream theory had integrated a multitude of Late Antique views and analyses, not always compatible with one another. They ranged from religious belief to philosophical discussions on the origin and value – if any – of dreaming, and from practical oneiromantic rules for deciphering a dream's prophetic message to the empirical 'science' of medical diagnosis through a patient's dreams. Late Antique dream theory was the end-product of a synthesis of all opposing views, codified in dream classifications[8] – either of a theoretical or practical nature – which attributed different origins, significance, form or function to different dream-types. Essentially, dreams were divided into non-prophetic – arising from exterior stimuli, biological processes or psychological factors – and prophetic – arising from a divinity or the inherent prophetic properties of the soul. Each division was further subdivided to accommodate dreams of different functions or forms. The wide variety of these classifications provided the Byzantines with the raw material for their own, more or less Christian, oneirology.

Although prophetic dreams had been validated in Early Christian times by their noticeable presence in both the Old and the New Testament, as well as by their prominent role in religious conversion and martyrdom, they were soon met with the hostility of the newly established Church because of their strong links to the pagan past and their role in the formulation and justification of heretical views.[9] Furthermore, as asceticism became an important trait of

[8] See A.H.M. Kessels, 'Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification', *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969), 422–4.

[9] On Early Christian dreaming see J. Le Goff, 'Le christianisme et les rêves (IIe–VII siècles)', in T. Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo* (Rome, 1985), 171–218; P. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 1994); G.G. Stroumsa, 'Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse', in D. Shulman and G.G. Stroumsa (eds), *Dream Cultures, Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (Oxford, 1999), 189–212.

Christian religiosity, dreams were also viewed as a significant medium through which the temptations afflicting the lives of Christian ascetics were graphically being expressed.[10] All these negative attributes were accommodated under a new type of deceitful dream, attributed to the Devil, which persistently undermined the validity of dreaming as a reliable prophetic medium.[11] In spite of this development, prophetic dreams did not disappear. They occur regularly in historical sources and even more prominently in the new Christian genre of hagiography.

Like most of the historiographical texts of the Byzantine period, the *Continuation of Theophanes* does not include non-prophetic dreams, nor does it concern itself with the potential of demonic origin and therefore demonic deception in dreams.[12] In keeping with a long established tradition of historical dreaming, it focuses on 'true' prophetic dreams. The *Continuation* was moreover written at a period which saw the culmination – as will be noted below – of a process of gradual rehabilitation of prophetic dreaming after the end of Iconoclasm. It fittingly exhibits a considerably more elaborate use of dreaming in relation to the rest of the Byzantine history writing.

* * *

In sharp contrast to the *Chronicle* of Theophanes, which introduced to Byzantine chronography a – seemingly amorphous – annalistic organization of its material,[13] the *Continuation of Theophanes* is organized in a more reader-friendly

---

[10] Cf. for example Athanasios of Alexandria, *Life of St Anthony*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (Paris, 1994).

[11] G. Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi. Le rêve et son interprétation d'après les sources byzantines', in Gregory (ed.), *I sogni*, 37–55; G.T. Calofonos, 'Ονειροκριτική και οραματική γνώση στην ύστερη αρχαιότητα και τον πρώιμο Χριστιανισμό', in D. Kyrtatas and C. Balla (eds), *Η μετάδοση της γνώσης στην αρχαιότητα = Topika* 5 (Athens, 1999), 79–88; S.M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium: Six Oneirocritica in Translation*, *with Commentary and Introduction* (Aldershot, 2008), 52–4.

[12] The possibility, or rather the impossibility, of demonic prophecy, however, is definitely a concern of the middle section of this text, the *Life of Basil*, as shown in I. Anagnostakis, 'Το επεισόδιο του Αδριανού: "πρόγνωσις" και "τελεσθέντων δήλωσις"', in N.G. Moschonas (ed.), *Η Επικοινωνία στο Βυζάντιο. Πρακτικά του Β΄ Διεθνούς Συμποσίου του Κέντρου Βυζαντινών Ερευνών του Εθνικού Ιδρύματος Ερευνών* (Athens, 1993), 195–226. Dreams are absent from this investigation of demonic prophecy, which is in accord with their treatment in this text as a trustworthy prophetic medium.

[13] Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883) (henceforth: Theophanes). On the work's annalistic organization see A.P. Kazhdan, with L. Sherry and C. Angelidi, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens, 1999), 219–34, and R. Scott, '"The Events of Every Year, Arranged without Confusion": Justinian and Others in the Chronicle of Theophanes', in P. Odorico, P.A. Agapitos and M. Hinterberger (eds), *L'écriture*

mode, arranging historical events by imperial reign.[14] A product, for the most part, of the so-called literary circle of the scholarly Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, the *Continuation* is clearly divided into three independently written sections. Most probably it evolved out of its second section, which covers the life of Constantine's grandfather, Basil I, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty. The *Vita Basilii* or *Life of Basil*,[15] is an important and innovative work, for it represents what is probably a unique instance of secular biography in Byzantium. It stands in stark contrast to – but inevitably shares some common characteristics with – hagiography, which dominated the literary tastes of the Byzantines. More akin to the literary genre of encomium than history, the *Life of Basil* is the only section of the *Continuation* that cites explicitly its author, the grandson of Basil, Emperor Constantine Porphyrogennetos himself – or so at least our text claims.[16]

The first section of this collective work, 'the *Continuation of Theophanes* proper', fills the gap between the chronicle of Theophanes and the *Life of Basil*, covering the reigns of four emperors, from the ill-fated Iconoclast Leo V to the last of the three emperors of the Amorian dynasty, the equally ill-fated Michael III.[17] This section gives no clear indication of its author, although the proem states explicitly that the work was commissioned by Constantine Porphyrogennetos, who took active part in its composition. There is more or less a consensus in

de la mémoire. La littérarité de l'historiographie. Actes du IIIe colloque international, Nicosie, 6–7–8 mai 2004 (Paris, 2006), 49–65.

[14] A.P. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, ed. C. Angelidi (Athens, 2006), 149–50. See also A. Markopoulos, 'From Narrative Historiography to Historical Biography. New Trends in Byzantine Historical Writing in the 10th–11th Centuries', *BZ* 102.2 (2009), 697–715, esp. 697–702.

[15] The work occupies Book 5 of *TheophCont*. A separate edition by the late I. Ševčenko has been published recently: *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii imperatoris amplectitur* (henceforth: *Vita Basilii*), ed. and Eng. trans. I. Ševčenko (Berlin, 2011). On the order of composition of the *Continuation's* sections I follow Ševčenko: see C. Mango, 'Introduction', in *Vita Basilii*, 3*–13*.

[16] A tremendous amount of ink has been shed – physically or digitally – on the problem of Constantine's authorship of this work. He appears in the work's title as the main author of the work, who carried out all the research but employed the services of a 'writer' – possibly a scribe, or most probably a 'ghost writer' as Ševčenko maintains, cf. Mango 'Introduction', 13*, with reference to I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus', in J. Shepard and S. Franklin (eds), *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Aldershot, 1992), 167–95; but see also I. Anagnostakis, 'Οὔκ εἰσιν ἐμὰ τὰ γράμματα. Ιστορία και ιστορίες στον Πορφυρογέννητο', *Symmeikta* 13 (2006), 97–209.

[17] *TheophCont* 1–4, ed. Bekker, 1.1–211.5. The work was commissioned by Constantine to an anonymous author who is believed to be different from the scribe or 'ghost writer' of the *Life of Basil*. There appears to be a consensus on this in modern scholarship. For a brief summary see Mango, 'Introduction', 12*–13*.

present-day scholarship – albeit a hesitant one – that the first section was written shortly after the *Life*, in the final years of Constantine's reign. After its completion, the two works were most likely considered as belonging to the same historical corpus.[18] They must have certainly functioned as a superior alternative to the history of Genesios, a work also commissioned by Constantine, which covered exactly the same period of time (Leo V–Basil I).[19]

The third section, which could be termed 'a continuation of *Theophanes' Continuation*', was most probably added in two instalments and covers the successors of Basil, up to the reign of Constantine Porphyrogennetos including a few years of the reign of his son Romanos II.[20] The authors of these two parts remain unknown to us. It has been often suggested, however, that the author of the second part, covering the reigns of Constantine (as sole emperor) and Romanos II, may be Theodore Daphnopates:[21] an intellectual, a high official at the court of two emperors, and an occasional dream-interpreter, as can be seen below. Equally unknown remain the dates of composition of the section's two parts. The first must have been written soon after the death of Constantine VII and the second during the early years of the reign of Nikephoros Phokas.[22]

Dynastic propaganda in favour of the reigning Macedonian dynasty is obvious in all three sections of the *Continuation*. In the first two sections, it was clearly orchestrated by Constantine Porphyrogennetos himself, whose rightful claim to the throne was threatened during the early years of his reign, when his regent Romanos Lekapenos established himself and – later – his two sons as co-emperors, pushing the young Constantine aside in an attempt to found a new dynasty. Therefore, the legitimacy of the Macedonian dynasty through claims of divine ordination of its founder Basil I to the throne

---

[18] Ibid., 8*–9*.

[19] (Joseph) Genesios (henceforth: Genesios), proem., ed. A. Lesmüller-Werner and H. Thurn (Berlin, 1973), 3.

[20] This section (Book 6 of the Bekker edition), could be termed as a continuation to the *Continuation of Theophanes*. Its two distinct parts were probably written by different authors. The first covers the reigns of Leo VI, Alexander, the minority of Constantine VII, and the reign of the usurper Romanos I Lekapenos, to whom its author appears sympathetic (*TheophCont*, ed. Bekker, 352.1–435.21). The author of the second part (436.1–481.13), however, is more sympathetic to the Macedonian dynasty. On this section of the continuation now see J.M. Featherstone, 'Theophanes Continuatus VI and *De Cerimoniis* I, 96', *BZ* 104 (2011), 109–16.

[21] See Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, 152–3; cf. however, Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus', 169; also A. Markopoulos, 'Theodore Daphnopatès et la Continuation de Théophane', *JÖB* 35 (1985), 171–82, who finds no hard evidence in support of Daphnopates' authorship; and more recently Featherstone, 'Theophanes Continuatus VI' (as above, n. 20), 109, n. 2, who summarizes the debate.

[22] Featherstone, 'Theophanes Continuatus VI' (as above, n. 20), 113.

is a major concern in these texts, and dream narratives play an important role in establishing this claim. Their well-defined narrative form and their elusive, mystifying nature make dreams particularly suited for this historical-propagandistic literary function.[23]

The *Continuation* includes ten dream narratives – all of them prophetic – five of which are to be found in the first section, four in the *Life of Basil*, and one in the last part of the last section, in the beginning of Constantine VII's reign as sole emperor.[24]

* * *

The story of Basil's rise to power is rather impressive, as are the four dreams related to it. The founder of the longest, mightiest and most popular Byzantine dynasty was born and raised a lowly peasant in Macedonia, moved to Constantinople, and through a chain of patrons of ascending status and power, landed on the imperial throne. An underlying purpose of his biography, apart from the unconditional praise of the founder of the reigning dynasty, was to justify the murder of his last benefactor, the Emperor Michael III who had created him co-emperor. As Alexander Kazhdan has observed, in the first part of the work, which relates Basil's life up to his accession as sole emperor, Michael serves as the anti-hero, the corrupt and evil emperor to whom the virtuous and charismatic Basil is contrasted, and whom he eventually had no other choice but to replace on the throne.[25]

Likewise, the divine signs of young Basil's imperial destiny, which are narrated in the first chapters of his *Life*,[26] provide the reader of the *Continuation* with a counterpoint to the ill omens predicting the downfall of the heretic Emperor Leo V as narrated in the first chapter of the first section of the collection. These auspicious portents present Basil's rise to power in compliance with the Will of God.[27] The elaborate series of the four prophetic

---

[23] See examples in Calofonos, 'Dream Narratives' (as above, n. 6).

[24] For an outline of the *Continuation*'s structure and the dream narratives' distribution, see Appendix below, pp. 121–2.

[25] Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, 140–141.

[26] Presented in great detail in the pioneering article of G. Moravcsik, 'Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I', DOP 15 (1961), 59–126, an always valuable survey.

[27] *Vita Basilii* 5, ed. Ševčenko, 22–6. When a young child, Basil had been repeatedly shaded by an eagle while asleep, an traditional sign of future royalty. The same sign had reportedly portended the rise of Marcian, the future husband of Pulcheria and hence emperor (see for example Theophanes, 104). Another future emperor, Philippikos, claimed that the very same sign had appeared to him in a dream. This resulted in his exile to Cephalonia for some time before he staged a successful *coup d'état* and finally seized the throne (Theophanes, 372, 378–9). For a discussion: Calofonos, 'Dream Narratives' (as above, n. 6), 142–3.

dreams in the narrative, rather unique in Byzantine historical writing, is an essential part of this process of legitimation of Basil and hence the Macedonian dynasty. The three are dreamt by his mother, while the fourth, a recurring dream, is dreamt by the first of his patrons, the abbot of St Diomedes' monastery in Constantinople.

When Basil decided to leave for the imperial capital in search of a better life his mother was reluctant. It was then that she had her first dream. She dreamt, just like the mother of Cyrus who had seen the vine – the narrator of the *Life of Basil* stresses[28] – that she gave birth to a huge golden plant, bearing flowers and fruit and climbing up the roof of the house. Its large trunk was of solid gold, while its branches and leaves were gilded. Basil's mother related the dream to an acquaintance who was a competent dream interpreter and who explained that her son would rise to greatness.[29] Soon afterwards, the prophet Elijah appeared in person to her in another dream. He assured her that her son was destined to become emperor and urged her to allow him to go to Constantinople.[30] When Basil, having secured his mother's consent, arrived finally at Constantinople, the holy martyr Diomedes took over from Elijah. He appeared three times in the dreams of the sluggish abbot of his monastery, convincing him to finally wake up and receive young Basil, who had found refuge for the night outside the monastery's locked gate. God had anointed Basil future emperor, and he was destined to contribute greatly to the monastery's restoration and growth, as St Diomedes pointed out.[31] Convinced by the saint's persistence – a traditional sign of a dream's true nature – the abbot complied,[32] but kept silent about this prediction, apparently for fear of persecution.[33] In the meantime, Basil's mother,

[28] The famous dream of the vine related to the birth of Cyrus was not dreamt by his mother Mandane, as stated in the *Life of Basil*, but by her father Astyages. He saw in his sleep a vine growing from his daughter's womb and overshadowing the whole of Asia: Herodotos 1.1.108.

[29] *Vita Basilii* 8.7–14, ed. Ševčenko, 30–32; dream narrative no. 6 in the Appendix below, p. 121.

[30] *Vita Basilii* 8.14–28, ed. Ševčenko, 32; dream narrative no. 7 in the Appendix below, p. 121.

[31] *Vita Basilii* 9.4–36, ed. Ševčenko, 34–6; dream narrative no. 8 in the Appendix below, p. 121.

[32] A repetition of a dream or vision three times is a marker its truthfulness. Cf. for example Acts 10:9–29, St Peter's vision commanding him to kill and eat unclean animals, which marks the acceptance of Gentiles to the Christian faith. On the significance of recurrent dreams see also Artemidoros of Daldis, *Oneirocritica*, 4.27, ed. R. Pack, *Artemidori Daldiani onirocriticon libri V* (Leipzig, 1963), (henceforth: Artemidoros). Furthermore, Moravcsik, 'Sagen und Legenden' (as above, n. 26), 94–5, offers an exhaustive list of parallels from the Byzantine period.

[33] Dreams prophesising future emperors were considered subversive anti-dynastic propaganda and were forbidden by law. See n. 62 below.

anxious about her son's whereabouts, had a third dream: she saw a golden plant which looked like a cypress, on top of which sat Basil. This time, his mother consulted a woman of renowned piety who assured her that her son would certainly become emperor one day.[34]

This impressive series of dreams is of exceptional importance from an oneirological point of view, for it covers two of the most significant types of prophetic dream. On the one hand, there is the elevated, *oracular* dream where a holy or revered person appears before the dreamer to deliver a straightforward message. Such dreams, unless of demonic origin, were normally considered God-sent.[35] The dream of the abbot of St Diomedes and the second dream of Basil's mother belong to this type. On the other hand, there is the popular *symbolic* dream which requires oneirocritical interpretation[36] by either a professional dream interpreter – a rare occurrence in Byzantine literature – or a person acquainted with such techniques, or even by use of a dreambook. The first and third dream of Basil's mother fall in this type.

The imagery of the two symbolic dreams in question is only loosely related to oneirocritical symbolism current at the time. The golden climbing tree, which parallels the dream of the vine related to Cyrus' birth, obviously refers to Basil himself, a very effective metaphor indeed for the greatest social climber of Byzantium. In some cases, vines in dreambooks stand for families, so the golden plant/vine in this dream points to the strength of the Macedonian dynasty.[37] Genesios offers a more extensive version of the interpretation of this dream, which includes a straightforward prediction of the dynasty's strength

[34] *Vita Basilii* 10.1–15, ed. Ševčenko, 38–40; dream narrative no. 9 in the Appendix below, p. 121.

[35] The 'oracular' type of dream is of renowned antiquity: in Greek literature it dates back to Homer. A major feature of pagan and Christian incubation and, of course, of Byzantine hagiography and historiography, 'oracular' dreams are closely related to theophanies. The dream classifications of Antiquity, such as the one recorded by Macrobius in his famous commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, dedicate a special sub-category of 'significant' or 'prophetic' dreams to 'oracular' dreams or *chrematismoi*: Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, 1.3.8, ed. J. Willis (Leipzig, 1963) (henceforth: Macrobius, *Commentarii*). It corresponds to the first class of the oneirological classification of Philo of Alexandria, *Περὶ τοῦ θεοπέμπτους εἶναι τοὺς ὀνείρους*, 1.1, ed. P. Savinel, *De Somniis I–II* (Paris, 1962), comprising God-sent plain and clear oracles.

[36] Symbolic, 'allegorical' or 'enigmatic' dreams are a second sub-category of significant dreams in the so-called 'oneiromantic' classifications of Artemidoros 1.2 and 4.1, and Macrobius, *Commentarii*, 1.3.10. In the oneirological classifications they usually correspond to dreams originating from the dreamer's soul. As Philo of Alexandria supports, these dreams are not clear and require professional dream interpretation: *Περὶ τοῦ θεοπέμπτους εἶναι τοὺς ὀνείρους* 2.5.

[37] On the vine as dream symbol, see Achmet, *Oneirokritikon* (henceforth: Achmet), 151, ed. F. Drexl, *Achmetis oneirocriticon* (Leipzig, 1925), 108.5–8.

and longevity.[38] The cypress tree, on the other hand, is related to a noble woman, in both oneirocritic literature and literary imagery of the times.[39] The golden cypress, on top of which Basil has climbed, most probably refers to an allegorical representation of Constantinople as an empress in the further guise of a symbolic, oneirocritical form.[40] It may also represent an implicit allusion to his marriage to Michael III's mistress, Eudokia Ingerina, with whom Basil rose to imperial rank and started the Macedonian dynasty.[41] More importantly, golden trees are more directly related to imperial power because they refer to the golden tree of the throne of Solomon in the Great Palace, a precious object prominent in imperial ceremony and propaganda. It was one of the *automata*, the mechanical devices

[38] Genesios 4.24, ed. Thurn, 76–7. In the *Life of Basil* this interpretation is implied, not only through its stated source, Astyages' dream of the vine growing out of his daughter's womb, but also through association to the well-known biblical motif of the Tree of Jesse: Isaiah 11.1.

[39] Achmet 151, ed. Drexl, 108.15–19; *Anonymous Dreambook* 187, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Anonyme Traumbuch des cod. Paris. gr. 2511', *Laographia* 8 (1925), 347–75. The much later *Epithalamion* composed by Nicholas Eirenikos on the occasion of the second marriage of John III Vatatzes deploys imagery strikingly similar to that in both of Basil's mother symbolic dreams: 'Εἰς εὐφυὴ κυπάριττον κιττὸς συνανατρέχει, | ἡ βασιλὶς κυπάριττος, κιττὸς ὁ βασιλεύς μου' ['On a shapely cypress tree climbs an ivy: the empress is the cypress tree, my emperor the ivy']: ed. A. Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte und Literatur der Palaiogenzeit', *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse* (Munich, 1920), 103–4. For further parallels see also J.C.B. Petropoulos, *Eroticism in Ancient and Medieval Greek Poetry* (London, 2003), 35–6.

[40] A similar interpretation of a golden tree bearing fruit is proposed by Paul Magdalino in his analysis of the decoration of the bath built by Basil's son and Constantine's father, Leo the Wise, in the imperial palace. Magdalino proposes that a golden tree depicted on the walls of Leo's bath was probably meant as a symbolic representation of the Empress Zoe Karbonopsina, his fourth wife and Constantine's mother. See P. Magdalino, 'The Bath of Leo the Wise and the "Macedonian Renaissance" Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial, Ideology', *DOP* 42 (1988), 97–118, with references to the dreambook of Achmet and literary works of the time. Magdalino, however, does not take into consideration the connection of this motif to the palatial automata (see below), a connection corroborated in this case by the singing birds depicted on the branches of the bath's golden tree.

[41] An interesting portrait of Eudokia in imperial costume and flanked by the two Crown Princes and future Emperors Leo and Alexander is found in folio Br of the famous illuminated manuscript *Parisinus gr.* 510, most probably a gift of Patriarch Photios to the Emperor Basil I. The inscription that runs around it describes Eudokia as a 'well-branched vine bearing the grapes of the Empire', transferring the dynastic symbolism of the first dream of Basil's mother from the emperor himself to his imperial wife. See I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 'Eudokia Makrembolitissa and the Romanos Ivory', *DOP* 31 (1977), 305–25, esp. 317 n. 58, and 'The portraits of Basil I in Paris gr. 510', *JÖB* 27 (1978), 19–24, as well as the more recent study of the manuscript by L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999), 162–3.

used to impress foreign visitors to the imperial court.[42] These wonder-inducing devices, commissioned by the Emperor Theophilos, were senselessly destroyed by his son Michael, as the first section of the chronicle informs us, obviously implying that Michael was not a worthy heir of his father's throne.[43]

The three dreams of Basil's mother conform to a known hagiographical pattern, in which the mother of a saint has dreams that foretell her offspring's illustrious future.[44] They originate in ancient biography: the father of Augustus, for example, had a dream of his wife Atia giving birth to the sun.[45] Similar dreams mark the births of Pericles and Alexander the Great, but also of Apollonios of Tyana. The difference in Basil's *Life* is that his mother's dreams do not appear at his birth, as is usually the case in ancient biography and in Christian hagiography. They are not plain indicators of greatness, but, together with the abbot's dream, they are an essential part of the development of events. It was his mother's dreams

[42] On *automata* see G. Brett, 'The Automata in the Byzantine "Throne of Solomon"', *Speculum* 29 (1954), 477–87; R. Hammerstein, *Macht und Klang: Tönende Automaten als Realität und Fiktion in der alten und mittelalterlichen Welt* (Bern, 1986), 43–58; A.R. Littlewood, 'Gardens of the Palaces', in H. Maguire (ed.) *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, DC, 1997), 32.

[43] *TheophCont* 4.21, ed. Bekker, 173.3–11, *Vita Basilii* 29.18–27, ed. Ševčenko, 114. Although reportedly destroyed by Michael, the automata are mentioned in *De Cerimoniis* and were in place at the imperial palace during Liutprand of Cremona's visit to Constantinople in 947: *Antapodosis* 6.5, ed. J. Becker (Leipzig, 1915). Therefore they were in existence at the time of the work's composition. It is highly probable that they were restored or reconstructed in the meantime. However, since there is no mention in the period's sources of any such reconstruction, it might also be possible that their destruction by Michael III is fictional, part of Macedonian dynastic propaganda and its attempt to denigrate the memory of the murdered emperor, a view adopted by T. Papamastorakis, 'Tampering with History: From Michael III to Michael VIII', *BZ* 96 (2003), 193–209, esp. 197–9.

[44] Before conceiving Daniel the Stylite, his mother Martha had dreamt of two bright stars coming down from heaven and resting beside her. They proved to signify the imperial couple who came to pay their respects to the saint later in his life. See *Life of Daniel the Stylite* 2 (dream), 46 (dream fulfilment), ed. H. Delehaye, *Les Saints Stylites* (Brussels, 1923), 1–97, esp. 2.14–3.13, 44.3–13. Also, Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina* 2, ed. P. Maraval, *Grégoire de Nysse, Vie de sainte Macrine* (Paris, 1972), 142–8; *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* 3–4 (his mother's dream of a bright star entering her womb and its triple interpretation), ed. and trans. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1970), 3–4; *Life of Alypios the Stylite* 2 (two dreams his mother had while pregnant), ed. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, 148–69, esp. 148.22–149.5.

[45] Suetonius, *Augustus* 94. Agarista, the mother of Pericles, dreamt that she gave birth to a lion: Plutarch, *Pericles*, 3.2–3. Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, dreamt that a thunderbolt fell on her, and his father Philip dreamt of applying a seal, depicting a lion, on his wife's womb: Plutarch, *Alexander* 2.3–5. The god Proteus appeared to the mother of Apollonius of Tyana in a dream to inform her that she would give birth to no other than the god himself: Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.4.

that allowed Basil to embark on his fortunate journey to the imperial capital and, once he was there, it was again a dream – the triple dream of a well-connected abbot – that helped him find a patron who introduced him to the imperial court. Through these dreams, the divine intervened to help Basil in his astonishing career.

After becoming emperor, Basil did not forget his debts. As it emerges later in the narrative, he expressed his gratitude – or, rather, he 'returned the favour', as the text of his *Life* rather blandly puts it – by dedicating the magnificent church he built in the imperial palace, the *Nea Ekklesia*, to the prophet Elijah, who had appeared in his mother's dream, and to Christ, who had obviously ordered him to do so, alongside the archangel Michael, the Virgin Mary and St Nicholas.[46] St Diomedes had already been rewarded for his own appearance in the abbot's dreams – but also for providing shelter to young Basil – by lavish gifts to the hospitable martyr's monastery and by a generous grant of revenues. His monastery's abbot – the recipient of the dream and the first patron of Basil – also received rewards which surpassed his hopes.[47]

Although they make a good story, the dreams in the *Life of Basil* are traditional in nature. In contrast to the vision of Leo's mother, from the first section of the *Continuation*, quoted in the beginning of this chapter, the dreamers in the *Life* are passive recipients of the dream's message, which is either verbal and clear, or visual and in need of decipherment. To find more examples of active, though sometimes unfortunate dreamers, I shall return to the first section of the chronicle.

* * *

As Alexander Kazhdan has noted, this section serves to invent four more anti-heroes, four more bad emperors, as a contrast with the pious and virtuous Basil.[48] The fact that Leo and the other two emperors preceding Michael III were Iconoclasts is rather helpful in this process. The two dreams haunting Leo V before his death express in the strongest possible tone divine disapproval of heretical Iconoclast emperors.[49] These dreams obviously serve this purpose well, and there is no need for repeats.

The three remaining dreams of this section fall within the crucial reign of Michael III, who was not an Iconoclast. His mother, the saintly Empress Theodora, aided by the Iconophile Patriarch and Saint Methodios, had restored icons, acting as regent of her then underage son. Two of the dreams are related to these two prominent figures of the Orthodox-Iconophile camp. The one features an impressive miracle by St Peter, who appeared by request in Methodios' dream

[46] *Vita Basilii* 83.6–12, ed. Ševčenko, 272–4.

[47] *Vita Basilii* 73.4–17, ed. Ševčenko, 252.

[48] Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)* (as above, n. 14), 145–6.

[49] See above, pp. 95–6.

and castrated him, setting him free of carnal desire. St Peter achieved this by applying strong pressure to the future patriarch's genitals with his right hand, a method very similar to that used by St Artemios in his posthumous miracles in the seventh century. Artemios, however, used this painful method for curing testicular hernia and other forms of male genital disease, through his patients' dreams at the healing centre in the church of St John at Oxeia in Constantinople, where his relics were kept. Methodios' ascetic dream 'cure' presents a rare and interesting reversal of the secular incubation of Artemios. It was narrated, according to the *Continuation*, by the ageing patriarch himself at his trial, when he had been falsely accused of adultery by his Iconoclast enemies. The patriarch's innocence was proven by a public display of his mortified genitals.[50]

The other dream is an extreme example of condensed dream narrative because it does not include either a description of the dream's content, or a definition of its dream type. The text simply states that Empress Theodora, then acting as regent for Michael, was instructed in a dream or vision to ask King Boris of Bulgaria for the release of the Byzantine missionary monk Theodore Koupharas, who had been held captive in Bulgaria for many years.[51] This led to the monk's exchange with Boris' sister who had been raised a captive in the Byzantine imperial court. Both Theodore and the Bulgarian princess are credited in the chronicle with major roles in Boris' subsequent conversion to Christianity, and the eventual

---

[50] *TheophCont* 4.10, ed. Bekker, 159.5–14; dream narrative no. 3, in the Appendix below, p. 121. Cf. *The Miracles of St Artemios*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra* (St Petersburg, 1909), 1–79, *passim*. The process pursued in Methodios' story to bring about the miraculous dream follows closely that in Artemios' cures: extensive prayer and then sleeping in the church where the relics of the 'healer' saint is kept: St Peter's in Rome, in Methodios' case. However, in contrast to Artemios, who cures his patients' bodies, St Peter inflicts an illness on his suppliant's body in order to cure his soul. Similar cases of curing carnal desire in a dream or a vision are quite common: see for example John Moschos, *Spiritual Meadow* 3, *PG* 87.3, 2853C–2856B; Palladios, *The Lausiac History* 29, ed. C. Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius. A Critical Discussion Together with Notes on Early Egyptian Monachism*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1904; repr. Hildesheim, 1967), 84–6; and also *Life of St Blasios of Amorion* 14, *AASS* Nov. 4, 663C–E, where St Peter is again the provider of the miraculous 'cure'. Although these dreams are similar to Methodios', in that they bring about removal of sexual desire, they do not effect any physical changes to the dreamer's body. On Artemios and Methodios see G.T. Calofonos, 'Ασθένεια και σωματικότητα στο πρώιμο Βυζάντιο: Τα Θαύματα του Αγίου Αρτεμίου', in D. Trakas (ed.), *Η Ιατρική στο Βυζάντιο = Archaiologia kai Technes* 103 (2007), 42–9. On Artemios see also A.P. Alwis, 'Men in Pain: Masculinity, Medicine and the *Miracles of St. Artemios*', *BMGS* 36 (2012), 1–19. On castration in general cf. the impressive study of K.M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago, 2003), which, however, omits a discussion of 'castration' visions and dreams.

[51] *TheophCont* 4.14, ed. Bekker, 162.13–18; dream narrative no. 4 in the Appendix below, p. 121.

Christianization of Bulgaria.[52] The dream story functions here to indicate that all these developments were orchestrated by Divine Providence, utilizing the Byzantine imperial authority as an important agent.

The last dream narrative of the first section concerns another of Michael III's guardians, Caesar Bardas, his uncle and, by then, the true power behind his throne. Bardas' dream follows the pattern of both the vision and the dream related to Leo V's fall. Like these, it appears as part of a series of ill omens that predict the fall of Bardas and, eventually, the downfall of Emperor Michael himself. Just as the vision of Leo's mother, it is also set in a church: the church of Hagia Sophia which stands in the dream of Bardas for the vision's church of Blachernai.[53] A divine judge also figures in the dream of Bardas: St Peter, who stands for the vision's Virgin Mary. Like the dream of Leo, Bardas' dream includes a hostile hierarch as well: the deposed Patriarch Ignatios who functions in this dream in the same way as Tarasios in the dream of Leo.

Bardas, in his dream, accompanied by Michael, enters the great church of Hagia Sophia on a busy feast day. As they enter, they see an old man, whom they understand to be St Peter, seated on a throne and flanked by two angels, with the deposed Patriarch Ignatios at his feet demanding vengeance for all the evils he had suffered by both Bardas and Michael. Peter grants the patriarch's request and orders one of his entourage to dismember them both.[54] Soon after he had this dream, Bardas was dismembered in the presence of his imperial nephew by a group of conspirators headed by Basil, who was acting on behalf of Michael. The assassins proceeded to remove the ceasar's genitals and parade them triumphantly before the gathered army.[55] This, of course, associates Bardas'

---

[52] *TheophCont* 4.14, ed. Bekker, 162.18–163.19.

[53] It is quite interesting that the dream of standing in church results in an accusation according to the dreambooks of Patriarchs Nikephoros and Germanos, an interpretation based on paronomasia (a pun on the similar sound of the words *ekklēsia* [church] and *enklēsis* [accusation]): *The Dreambook of Patriarch Nikephoros* 32, ed. G. Guidorizzi, *Pseudo-Niceforo, Libro dei sogni* (Naples, 1985), (henceforth: *Nikephoros*); *The Dreambook of Patriarch Germanos* 58, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Traumbuch des Patriarchen Germanos', *Λαογραφία* 7 (1923), 428–48. This negative meaning of churches in Byzantine oneirocriticism is further developed in the much later *Dreambook of Manuel Palaiologos* 27, ed. A. Delatte, 'Ὀνειροκριτικὸν κατὰ Μανουὴλ Παλαιολόγον', in *Anecdota Atheniensia*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1927), 511–27, esp. 518.

[54] *TheophCont* 4.40, ed. Bekker, 203.12–204.11; dream narrative no. 5 in the Appendix below, p. 121.

[55] In a recent study Ilias Anagnostakis and Titos Papamastorakis have drawn attention to this fact in their analysis of one of the miniatures in the Madrid Skylitzes manuscript, an outright depiction of Bardas' posthumous castration: I. Anagnostakis and T. Papamastorakis, 'Πορφυρών ονειράτων όψεις και χρήσεις. Αφήγηση και εικονογράφηση βασιλικών ονείρων στο Βυζάντιο', in G.T. Calofonos (ed.), *Το όνειρο στο Βυζάντιο = Archaiologia kai Technes* 79 (June 2001), 26–33.

dream with Patriarch Methodios', if only by contrast. It indicates that the divine sentence to death by dismemberment, pronounced, in Bardas' dream, on both Bardas and his nephew Michael III, was to be understood as including this highly evocative act of castration, which, in the case of Michael's later murder by Basil, though not carried out physically, clearly symbolized the end of the Amorian dynasty.[56] Both dreams feature St Peter in the role of the representative of the Divine. Although his presence in Bardas' dream would certainly be associated with the papacy's siding with the deposed Ignatios in his conflict with his successor Photios, a personal favourite of Bardas, the *Continuation* plays down the entire story.[57] St Peter functions in this narrative as a religious figure of high status who denounces the last two Amorian rulers. However, although the acting ruler, Bardas, is condemned in his dream by St Peter to the fires of Hell, Michael – the reigning emperor who elevated Basil I to the throne – though conveniently sentenced to death, is magnanimously spared eternal damnation.

Unlike the dreams in the *Life of Basil*, or the incubation-dream of Patriarch Methodios, dreaming experiences such as that of Bardas[58] resist oneirological classification in terms of traditional Late Antique dream interpretation. Although they can be classified under the heading of prophetic dream-visions,[59]

---

[56] An interpretation also suggested by Anagnostakis and Papamastorakis in the above article.

[57] This connection of St Peter's role in Bardas' dream with the role played by Pope Nicholas in the conflict between Ignatios and Photios was first emphasized by J.M. Featherstone, 'A Note on the Dream of Bardas Caesar in the *Life of Ignatius* and the Archangel in the Mosaic over the Imperial Doors of St Sophia', *BZ* 74 (1981), 42–3. Featherstone discusses the dream of Bardas, as it appears in its original version in Niketas David Paphlagon's *Life of Ignatios*, *PG* 105, 533D–36C. However, the function of this dream narrative within the context of the *Continuation* is different. For Niketas David, the author of the *Life*, the excommunication of Photios by the pope was a useful tool both in his defence of his hero Ignatios and in his attack on Photios. In the case of the *Continuation*, however, which holds an explicitly pro-Macedonian outlook, this story would have been an irrelevant and annoying detail, especially after the *de facto* reconciliation of Ignatios and Photios, enforced by Basil I, and the two patriarchs' more or less common stance against the papacy's claims in Bulgaria. Furthermore, for Constantine VII and his supporters, the conflict between the two patriarchs of Constantinople and the involvement of the pope would have been painfully reminiscent of the tetragamy crisis, a major threat to young Constantine's legitimacy as heir to the throne. Therefore it is not surprising that, unlike the *Life of Ignatios* (*PG* 105, 515B–25D), the *Continuation* keeps silent about these embarrassing facts (*TheophCont* 4.30–32, ed. Bekker, 193.4–196.5).

[58] As for example the two dreams related to Leo V's death, discussed above.

[59] A sub-category of significant dreams which comprises self-explanatory clear prophetic dreams with no need of interpretation. Artemidoros (1.2 and 4.1) terms them '*theorēmatikoi oneiroi*' and Macrobius (*Commentarii* 1.3.2 and 1.3.9) 'prophetic visions', in Greek *horamata*. Incubation-dreams like Methodios' are of course 'oracular'. Artemidoros (1.6 and 4.2), however, creates a special sub-category for these dreams called 'petitionary'. These, according to Artemidoros, are marred by the dreamer's desires, and therefore are rarely true.

such dreams are not mere predictions. They serve as windows on to a different realm of reality – or rather – as points in time where different levels of reality overlap and interact on a synchronic axis. Such dreams provide glimpses into the workings of Divine Retribution, but sometimes of Divine Providence as well, since they offer to some of the sinners the option to repent and at least save their souls.

In compliance with the spirit of the dream, which makes clear to the reader of the *Continuation* that the murder of Bardas, as well as that of Michael, were in accordance with Divine Will, Basil, on becoming sole-emperor, reinstated Ignatios to the See of Constantinople. Like the dream figures in his mother's and the abbot's dreams, St Peter, who ordered Bardas' and Michael's execution, appears also to have been the recipient of the emperor's gratitude, expressed by the dedication to him of a new chapel in the imperial palace.[60]

* * *

The significant number and variety of dream narratives in the *Continuation of Theophanes* attests to a renewed interest in dreaming, starting after the period of Iconoclasm. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, dreams enjoyed high status in early Christianity, commensurate to the important role they had played in both conversion and martyrdom. Later however, their prophetic value was gradually undermined by the attempt of the Church to control prophecy but also of the state to regulate their political implications. An emphasis on the demonic power to deceive in dreams, in the subsequent ascetic literature,[61] aided by a legal ban on dream interpretation, dating back to imperial legislation of the time of Augustus, attempted to suppress both the religious and the political power of dreams.[62] Eventually these attempts proved unsuccessful, as indicated for example by the very existence of the dream narratives described here.

During Iconoclasm, when the cult of icons had also suffered persecution, dreams sided with the Iconophile cause, lending to icons their long-established

---

[60] *Vita Basilii* 88.6–13, ed. Ševčenko, 286.

[61] Dreaming is a private experience, very difficult to control. Dreams always played an important role in subversive propaganda, in justifying heretical views or in political *coups d'état*. Although the prophetic power of dreams is duly acknowledged in a number of patristic sources, ascetic literature is hostile to sleeping and dreaming, as it recognizes that, during sleep, the ascetics are more prone to demonic attacks. On this and the Church's ambiguous attitude see Calofonos, 'Ονειροκριτική και οραματική γνώση' (as above, n. 11), 79–88. See also B. Krönung's contribution to this volume, a stimulating account of early monastic attitudes, not only to ecstasy but also to dreams.

[62] Cf. *Codex Theodosianus* 9.16.6 (358); see Calofonos, 'Dream Narratives' (as above, n. 6), 143 and n. 36, for references to the secondary literature on the subject.

miraculous and prophetic powers.[63] 'Documented' cases of prophetic dreams directly related to icons were used extensively in theological argument to legitimize the Iconophile position and, when the Iconophile party proved victorious, prophetic dreaming triumphed as well.[64] Even oneirocriticism, the secular art of dream interpretation, often classed as 'pagan' or 'demonic' in the past, resurfaces under a new Christian guise. A group of short dreambooks, which pose as the work of major religious figures, such as the Iconophile Patriarchs and Saints Nikephoros, Germanos and even Tarasios, date from this period.[65]

In the *Continuation of Theophanes*, this new blossoming of oneirocriticism is reflected in the appearance of a secular dream interpreter in the *Life of Basil*[66] who is on the 'righteous side' (that is on Basil's side). Up to this point in Byzantine chronography, professional dream interpreters implicitly associated with the pagan art of dream divination are mentioned only when employed by heretical emperors such as Anastasios or Constans II.[67] Furthermore, the Emperor Basil himself is portrayed in the *Life* as a stern believer in the prophetic

---

[63] A characteristic type of dream, where icons where used to verify appearances of holy figures in dreams became particularly popular during the Iconoclast controversy as evident in post-Iconoclastic hagiography. Cf. for example the ninth-century *Life of St Irene of Chrysobalanton*, ed. J.O. Rosenqvist, *The Life of St Irene, Abbess of Chrysobalanton* (Uppsala, 1986), which includes a series of dreams analysed by N. Tsironis, 'Dreams in the Life of Eirene of Chrysobalanton', paper read at the Dumbarton Oaks Workshop: The (Mis)Interpretation of Byzantine Dream Narratives (Washington, DC, 8–10 November 2012): more on such dreams below, pp. 117–8.

[64] Cf. G.[T.] Calofonos, 'Dreams of Icons and Icons of Dreams', communication read at the Twenty-First Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. *The Byzantine Eye: Word and Perception* (Birmingham, 21–24 March, 1987), summary in *BBBS* 14 (1988), 40, demonstrating a methodical utilization of prophetic dreaming in theological argument in favour of icons; and Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu,' (as above, n. 11), 41, 47, a pioneering article which does not consider, however, this utilization. See also a useful survey by Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium* (as above, n. 11), 54–7.

[65] Cf. the dreambooks attributed to Patriarchs Nikephoros I and Germanos I, referred to in n. 53 above. Also, a recently discovered manuscript attributes the dreambook it includes (yet another version of *Nikephoros*) to both the *Souda* (see n. 71 below) and Patriarch Tarasios: T.[E.] Detorakes, 'Τα βυζαντινά ονειροκριτικά. Δύο νέα χειρόγραφα', *Palimpseston* 16 (1996), 65—74, esp. 74. The attribution to Tarasios is in tune with the trend of the time and was probably inspired by the Iconophile patriarch's role in the dream of Leo. On false attributions of authorship in dreambooks functioning as markers of the their status see G.[T.] Calofonos, 'Dream Interpretation: A Byzantinist Superstition?', *BMGS* 9 (1984/85), 215–20.

[66] In the first dream of Basil's mother cited in n. 29 above.

[67] See for example Theophanes, ed. De Boor, 163–4 (Anastasios), and 345–6 (Constans). For an analysis of Anastasios' dream in Malalas, see Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο' (as above, n. 6), 304–6.

value of dreaming – a practising dreamer, often seeking the solution to pressing problems of the state in sleep.[68] Whether an invention of the *Life's* author or not, Basil's adherence to the power of dreams connects the emperor with the ancient tradition of royal dreaming, where dreams function as channels of a private communication of the divinely ordained ruler with the Divinity.[69] It is a tradition rooted in the theocracies of Egypt and the Ancient Near East and thus connected to the 'pagan' art of dream interpretation, but enjoying, at the same time, biblical approval through the prophets Daniel and Joseph, the two famous royal dream interpreters of the Old Testament. Byzantine historiography offers many examples of royal dreams, but Basil's portrayal as such a prolific dreamer is rather unique.

True to its founder's spirit, the Macedonian dynasty was obviously much more positive towards prophetic dreams and oneiromancy. The legal ban on dream interpretation, in force since the times of Augustus, was formally removed from Macedonian imperial legislation, as evident in the *Basilika*.[70] In the court of Constantine Porphyrogennetos, this newly found interest in dreaming reaches its peak. The *Continuation* with its impressive dream narratives attests to this, as well as the *Souda*, the tenth-century dictionary which owes much to the so-called 'encyclopaedism' of the scholarly emperor's literary circle. The *Souda* treats dream interpretation in a particularly favourable manner: it includes entries on the terminology of dreaming, on the dream interpreters of the past[71] and even on the interpretation of certain dream symbols.[72] Most interestingly, the *Souda* reintroduces the ancient distinction between significant prophetic *oneiroi* and insignificant non-prophetic *enypnia*, a distinction known

[68] *Vita Basilii* 72, ed. Ševčenko, 250.44–54.

[69] On dreams related to Roman emperors up to Maurice, see G. Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (Stuttgart, 2000); on dreams in the Carolingian court see P.E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln and London, 1994), esp. 5–22, a survey of royal dreams from Antiquity to the Carolingians.

[70] *Basilika* 60.39.26; cf. Balsamon's comments in G.A. Rhalles, and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων και ἱερῶν κανόνων*, vol. 1 (Athens, 1852), 192. See Calofonos, 'Dream Interpretation' (as above, n. 65), 215–20. In addition, Leo VI the Wise, to whom the original version of the *Basilika* is ascribed, was, according to Maria Mavroudi, most probably the emperor for whom the Middle-Byzantine dreambook of Achmet was compiled, for 'he was an educated man who was interested in literature as well as occult sciences and divination': M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, 2002), 61. On this influential dreambook see below, n. 74.

[71] *Souda*, ed. A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* (5 vols, Leipzig, 1928–38), *s.v.* 'ὄνειρον' and 'ἐνυπνιον' (terminology); 'Αρτεμίδωρος', 'Αστράμψυχος' and 'Πάππος Ἀλεξανδρεύς' (dream interpreters).

[72] See for example ibid., vol. 2, 681.2–4; vol. 3, 338.24–6; vol. 4, 436.20–30, vol. 4, 623.30–624.2; vol. 4, 634.26–8. These are verses from the *Nikephoros* dreambook, which are explicitly attributed to the Iconophile patriarch, cf. Guidorizzi, in *Nikephoros*, 43–5.

to us through the second-century dreambook of Artemidoros of Daldis,[73] to whom the *Souda* also devotes an entry. Yet another dreambook – most probably the *Dreambook of Achmet*[74] – is listed among the few books the emperor takes with him in military campaigns in the small treatise *On what should be observed when the Emperor goes on campaign*, a work probably written by none other than Constantine Porphyrogennetos himself.[75]

Royal dreaming – and, of course, interpretation – is prominent in the dreambook of Achmet, which offers, for example, special interpretations for dreams dreamt by the emperor. Furthermore, it presents the supposed authors of its fictional sources as the dream interpreters to four legendary kings: the unnamed 'king of India', 'Saanisan, the king of Persia', 'Pharaoh, the king of the Egyptians' (sic), and, of course, Caliph al-Ma'moūn.[76] This exuberant royal exoticism is well suited to the Macedonian dynasty's claims of noble oriental imperial descent, from the Parthian dynasty of the Arsacids alongside Constantine the Great as well as Alexander – claims included in the *Life of Basil* and other pro-Macedonian

[73] The dreambook of Artemidoros is the only surviving oneirocritical treatise from Antiquity. It was copied and read throughout the Byzantine period, as suggested by the distribution of its manuscripts.

[74] Unlike the other Byzantine dreambooks circulating in the Middle Byzantine period – which have the form of relatively short alphabetical lists of dream symbols and their interpretations – the so-called *Dreambook of Achmet* follows a thematic organization of its material, and a more extensive, analytical interpretation of the dream symbols, resembling in this respect the dreambook of Artemidoros. The seminal study of its Arabic sources by Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation* (as above, n. 70), solved the long-standing problem of its origins. It appears to be a compilation of material, translated word for word from the Arabic and cleverly adapted for the Christian Byzantine audience. It was compiled sometime between the end of Iconoclasm and ca 1075.

[75] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Ὅσα δεῖ γίνεσθαι τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ὑψηλοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ῥωμαίων μέλλοντος φοσσατεῦσαι*, ed. J.F. Haldon, *Three Treatises on Byzantine Military Expeditions* (Vienna, 1990), 106 (text) and 211 (commentary). John Haldon, following a generally accepted view at the time, proposed in his commentary that the unnamed dreambook was Artemidoros. Although this cannot be excluded, Achmet, or even one of the shorter *oneirokritika* like Nikephoros appear to be much more likely candidates. Mavroudi also supports Achmet, but does not consider the shorter dreambooks: *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation* (as above, n. 70), 426–7, esp. n. 122.

[76] Ma'moūn features prominently in *TheophCont* 4.27, ed. Bekker, 185.15–191.3, in the well-known stories about Leo the Mathematician and the antagonism between the Abbasid caliph and Emperor Theophilos with regard to scientific learning. According to Mavroudi, however, it is highly improbable that this dreambook was originally ascribed to 'Achmet the son of Sereim, the dream interpreter of the Chaliph Ma'moūn'. Even so, both the interpreter and the caliph were definitely included in the exemplary dream interpretations. On the work's dates, purported authorship and fictional sources see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation* (as above, n. 70), 1–62.

sources.[77] It is also, well suited to the appropriation of the royal dream foretelling the birth of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia, to mark the ascent of the Byzantine dynasty's founder.

Dreams feature strongly in the period's literature, as for example in the *Life of St Andrew the Fool*, an extraordinary piece of hagiographical fiction, which displays an unusually inventive use of dreams.[78] By its inclusion of a lengthy description of a visionary journey to the afterlife, this work serves also as an example of the tenth-century's renewed interest in this ever popular Christian literary genre as well as in other forms of apocalyptic literature. This development might be very well connected to eschatological expectations arising from the approach of the end of the first millennium from the birth of Christ,[79] but undoubtedly is also related to the period's more general interest in dreaming.[80]

The tenth-century official and intellectual Theodore Daphnopates – whether he is the author of the last part of the *Continuation* or not – offers further proof of this interest in dreaming in his correspondence with Constantine's son, Romanos II.[81] Under the pretext of interpreting an allegorical religious apocalyptic dream, Theodore and Romanos exchange an unusual encoded personal communication, critical, I believe, for Daphnopates' own future in imperial administration.[82] In his letter to the emperor, Daphnopates also demonstrates a

---

[77] *Vita Basilii* 2–3, ed. Ševčenko, 10–18. A similar claim is also mentioned casually by Leo VI the Wise, *Funerary Oration for His Parents*, ed. T. Antonopoulou, *Leonis VI sapientis imperatoris Byzantini homiliae* (Turnhout, 2008), 199.126–200.139.

[78] *Life of St Andrew the Fool*, ed. L Rydén (2 vols., Uppsala, 1995). On dreams in this text see G.T. Calofonos, 'The Magician Vigrinos and his Victim: A Case of Magic from the *Life of St Andrew the Fool*', in J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (London and New York, 2008), 64–71, and C. Angelidi, 'A Woman's Dreams in the Life of Andrew the Fool', paper read at the Dumbarton Oaks Workshop: *The (Mis)Interpretation of Byzantine Dream Narratives* (Washington, DC, 8–10 November, 2012).

[79] P. Magdalino, 'The Year 1000 in Byzantium', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2003), 233–70, collects a group of works of apocalyptic literature from this period, including visionary accounts of the Other World. He proposes that the composition of so many texts of this sort is related to the Byzantines' preoccupation with the end of the world around the year 1000. Cf., however, A. Timotin, 'Byzantine Visionary Accounts of the Other World: A Reconsideration', in J. Burke et al. (eds), *Byzantine Narrative. Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Melbourne, 2006), 404–20, who expresses strong reservations with regard to this thesis. On visions of the Other World see also C. Cupane's contribution to this volume.

[80] Apocalyptic literature is traditionally connected with the form of a vision or dream narrative, the most famous example being the Apocalypse of John, a vision.

[81] Theodore Daphnopates, letters 15 and 16, ed. J. Darrouzès and L.G. Westerink, *Théodore Daphnopatès. Correspondance* (Paris, 1978), 155–69.

[82] Cf., however, P. Odorico, 'Oneirokritika. Critique des rêves ou critique par les rêves?', in P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris, 2012), 11–22, who believes the letter of Romanos II addressed to

striking awareness of the oneirological discussions of the past about the nature of dreaming. Furthermore, his analysis of significant dreams, attributing their prophetic power to God, is a first attempt, after a long period, to systematically treat a Christian theory of dreams in a favourable light: 'It is God Himself', Daphnopates remarks, 'Who manifests the future through symbols (*symbola*), allegories (*ainigmata*), visions (*horaseis*), and revelations (*apokalypseis*)'.[83]

* * *

The only dream narrative in the last section of the *Continuation* occurs in the beginning of the chapter on Constantine Porphyrogennetos' reign and may well have been written by Daphnopates. It is a relatively long narrative that recalls the ones concerning Leo V as well as Bardas and Michael III: an elaborate dream-vision of a private Last Judgement – where, however, apocalyptic overtones are more obvious – marking the end of the life of Romanos Lekapenos, the father-in-law and usurper of the throne of Constantine.[84]

Romanos was in exile in the Prince's Islands, having been deposed by his very own sons – who had in turn been arrested and exiled by Constantine. He then had a dream in which he was dragged naked by two eunuchs to an enormous fire[85] tended by a great number of demons, which occupied the whole of the *Tzykanisterion*, the imperial polo court at the palace.[86] Two other people – one

Daphnopates to be a forgery and follows an altogether different line of interpretation of the purpose and function of these texts. Although interesting, I feel that his argument is not entirely convincing Nevertheless, whatever the 'correct' interpretation of this piece of correspondence might be, the fact remains that Theodore Daphnopates was a man with a keen interest in dream narratives and their interpretation.

[83] Theodore Daphnopates, letter 16.140–1, ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 167. Of a completely different nature, letter 17 (on pp. 158–71) does not include a dream narrative but refers to a nocturnal emission, a phenomenon which is usually related to non-significant or demonic dreams of carnal desire, but not in this letter. It represents a unique case in Byzantine literature of a description of such an occurrence in a playful manner and in a secular, non-ascetic context.

[84] *TheophCont* 6.[5].4, ed. Bekker, 438.20–440.14; Dream narrative no. 10 in the Appendix below, p. 122.

[85] To be burned by fire denotes great calamities in Achmet 158, ed. Drexl, 118–20; if an emperor dreams this the calamities will befall to his people as well. In the *Dreambook of Prophet Daniel*, being burnt by fire signifies an accusation: 191, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Traumbuch des Propheten Daniel nach dem Cod. Vatic. Palat. gr. 319', *BZ* 26 (1926), 290–314. The fire in the dream of Romanos Lekapenos, however, does not require an oneirocritical interpretation. Its signification of the fires of Hell would be obvious to the reader, as would be the eunuchs' signification of angels, cf. Achmet, 10, ed. Drexl, 5–6.

[86] It is interesting that the dream's setting is the Tzykanisterion of the imperial palace, rather than a church or some other public space, as is the case in the dream/vision of Leo's mother and Bardas' dream. This lends to Romanos' dream narrative a more private character.

of Romanos' sons and the bishop of Herakleia – were thrown in and burned, and the next day the emperor learned that they had both been put to death at the very time of his dream,[87] as the narrator of the *Continuation* informs us. Romanos himself was saved at the last moment in his dream by the Mother of God who appeared suddenly, stopped the eunuchs, asking them to be merciful, and clothed the terrified naked emperor.[88]

This dream, according to the chronicle, had a tremendous effect on Romanos. It led him to the staging of an exuberant performance of self-humiliation, involving a public confession of his sins. Stripped of his clothes, in front of 300 weeping monks, he prostrated himself and asked for forgiveness from each and every one of them. All this culminated in an extensive whipping session, provided by a neophyte. The old emperor finally acquired an official letter of absolution, after more prayers and acts of devotion, as well as a small miracle. He was buried with this precious document when he died shortly afterwards.[89]

Romanos I was much more fortunate than his fellow imperial dreamers in the first section of the *Continuation*. Unlike Leo and Bardas, he was spared execution and was offered an opportunity to be absolved of his sins. But, then again, he was the father-in-law of the new reigning emperor, the grandfather of his son and heir. His dream adds a much more personal and intimate tone to such dream narratives of divine judgement. Nonetheless, it suitably marks the rebirth of the Macedonian dynasty, with the accession of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos to the throne as sole emperor, and it reaffirms divine sanction of the dynasty's legitimacy.

A sympathetic reader of the time might have been moved to tears by the self-humiliation of the once all-powerful emperor.[90] However, Constantine

---

[87] Here again we have an example of a dream that functions on the synchronic axis.

[88] Cf. *Dreambook of Prophet Daniel*, 99 (as above, n. 85): nakedness signifies a dangerous loss. Cf. also Achmet 118, ed. Drexl, 69–70: nakedness in public signifies disclosure of one's secrets, dishonour and oppression; nakedness in private signifies struggle to achieve something which will be eventually achieved.

[89] Thus, Romanos was offered a chance to repent before he died, which suited perfectly the Macedonian dynasty's propagandistic purposes. This story is analogous to the posthumous absolution of the Iconoclast Emperor Theophilos, demanded for obvious reasons of Amorian dynastic propaganda by his widow, the Empress and Saint Theodora, when she restored the veneration of icons. The story of Theophilos' last minute repentance for his Iconoclastic policy on his death-bed is recorded in Theodora's *Life* and it fittingly involves a dream indicating that he would be granted absolution. *Life of St Theodora*, 8.3–42, ed. A. Markopoulos, 'Βίος τῆς αὐτοκράτειρας Θεοδώρας (BHG 1731)', *Symmeikta* 5 (1983), 249–85, esp. 263–5.

[90] Surviving only in two eleventh-century manuscripts, the *Continuation* was addressed to a small but influential readership: the high officials and other members of the imperial court. Political sympathies always varied in these cycles, as shown, for example, by

himself, whose throne Romanos Lekapenos attempted to usurp, had he read this story, would surely have been greatly amused by his father-in-law's fit of self-blame. The same would be true for his son Romanos II, who would have never inherited the throne had his maternal grandfather's attempt to seize the throne been successful. But this ambivalence is an integral part of the elusive power of dream narratives.

* * *

In his survey of historiographical dreams of medieval Byzantium, Paul Magdalino uses the dream narratives of the *Continuation of Theophanes* as the basis for establishing a typology of medieval historiographical dreams. He finds that most of the dreams in the *Continuation*, and subsequent Byzantine historiography for that matter, belong to a category of conventional dreams which he calls 'hagiographical-iconic'. He juxtaposes this category to a second one, which includes the considerably fewer 'symbolic' dreams. To these he adds a third miscellaneous category comprising dreams of a 'subversive' nature – a category determined by a criterion of a different order, since it is based on the function of the dream or the 'message' it conveys, rather than the typology of its visual content.[91]

Magdalino proposes the term 'iconic' on the ground of an affinity in these dreams with a specific type of miracle-dream, which came into fashion during the Iconoclast controversy and which advertised the use of icons as means of validation of a prophetic dream's authenticity. In most cases, it was not just the likeness of a dream figure to an icon that offered this validation, but its *exact likeness*. Such a likeness would guarantee to the dreamer that the holy figure who appeared in his or her dream was authentic and not, for example, a demon in disguise, since demons were thought to be unable to assume an exact likeness of a holy image.[92] As far as I can tell, none of the dreams in the *Continuation*, in the form in which they appear in this text, fall under this specific heading. Magdalino is perfectly right to discern an affinity to these dreams in the dream of Bardas, but this would appear to apply only in the version found in this dream

---

the pro-Lekapenian, anti-Macedonian sentiments expressed in the dreamless first part of the third section, which is the odd one out in this dreamful pro-Macedonian compilation. I believe that Romanos' dream, which marks the beginning of the second, 'pro-everyone' part of the third section, artfully plays with this twofold attitude of sympathy towards and derision of Romanos. On the *Continuation*'s intended readership see J.M. Featherstone, 'Theophanes Continuatus: A History for the Palace', in P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris, 2012), 123–35.

[91] See the contribution of P. Magdalino in this volume.

[92] On this cf. Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu' (as above, n. 11); Calofonos, 'Dreams of Icons' (as above, n. 64); and the later, more comprehensive, treatment by G. Dagron, 'Holy Images and Likeness', *DOP* 45 (1991), 23–33.

narrative's source, the *Life of the Patriarch Ignatios*.[93] In the *Life's* version, the dreamer indeed recognizes St Peter in his sleep, because of his resemblance to his icon, but this crucial detail is left out by the author of the first section of the *Continuation* in his version of the story. The fact that the author chose to omit this detail, suggests, in my view, that the specific Iconophile type of dream – although it continues to appear in Byzantine literature – was already becoming unimportant in the tenth century, when the status of the holy images was no longer under threat. In my opinion it may not be sufficiently accurate to term 'iconic' the dreams in which holy figures appear, when the dream narrative does not include specific mention of icons as means of the figures' identification or verification. Appearances of holy figures in dreams or visions are very common in the period before Iconoclasm, as they were in the period before Christianity, or even in the context of aniconic religions, such as Judaism or Islam. Identification of a person in a dream does not necessarily require visual knowledge of his or her features: it is often part of the dreaming experience itself.

It must of course be admitted that dreaming is a predominantly visual experience and therefore visual material such as religious representations in art are an important component of dream content, but not always the most important. Nevertheless, the division of dreams into two broad categories might be too schematic to be useful in a close examination of dream narrative function.

The term 'iconic' may be further confusing, I believe, because it may imply that such dreams are static and 'conservative', while 'symbolic' dreams might be expected to be more active and inventive. Both implications do not apply to most of the *Continuation*'s dreams, where the symbolic dreams of Basil's mother are – not iconically but photographically – static and as conventional as the oracular appearances of the prophet Elijah and St Diomedes, on account of their close adherence to their sources – namely antique historiography and oneirocritical tradition. By contrast, some of the so-called 'iconic' dreams show intense action: coming and going, dialogue, complaints, pleas for revenge, administration of justice, death sentences, extreme danger, execution orders, being saved or not at the very last moment; in other words, cinematographic action and suspense. There is nothing static or restrained, to my mind, in the highly emotional vision of Leo's mother, who found herself in the middle of a large church filled with blood, a bowl of which a young girl ordered her to drink. Therefore, I believe that much of the variety and richness of the *Continuation*'s dream narratives would be forfeited if narratives like that of Leo's mother are classified as 'iconic-hagiographical' dreams along with the solemn, oracular appearances of certain saints who deliver a verbal message to a passive dreamer.

---

[93] See Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios* 67, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Aldershot, 1998), 163–4 and 204–5.

Hagiography is indeed a prominent genre of Byzantine literature. Byzantine historiography – and chronography still more – has succumbed to its influence from the very beginning. The *Continuation of Theophanes* in particular offers us a rare opportunity to discern this influence in dream narratives, including, as it does, two narratives of which we have the hagiographical sources: the dream of Bardas which – as mentioned above – derives from the *Life of Ignatios*,[94] and the dream of Leo V, which originates in the *Life* of the Iconophile Patriarch Tarasios.[95] Although the two sources of the dreams are definitely hagiographical, they belong to a highly political brand of hagiography. They concern patriarchs – that is, high officials of the empire with a prominent role in political developments. They also involve emperors – the heads of state. Active patriarchs and – most importantly – sinful emperors are such stuff as quite a few of Byzantine chronography's dreams are made on, and this is as historiographical as the hagiographical dream will ever be.[96]

* * *

Whatever their origins, prophetic dream narratives in Byzantine historiography have a tendency to acquire a life of their own within the larger narratives in which they are found. They connect with one another, sometimes in unexpected ways, as well as with narrative blocks which have a similar function in the text, such as narratives of omens, prophecies and so on. Then, through the accounts of the events that lead to their fulfilment, they tend to embrace even longer parts of the historiographical texts, thus placing them within the frame of their own narrative. In the *Continuation of Theophanes* – and especially its first two sections – this holds particularly true. Most dreams are connected either to other dreams, or to other prophetic signs. A characteristic example is the vision of Leo's mother which is linked to the emperor's own dream, but before that to the prediction derived from the book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, and, even before that, at the beginning of the *Continuation*, to the prophecy of the monk at Philomelion. All four narrative blocks create an escalation of suspense that reaches its climax with Leo's own dream and the description leading to the emperor's death. The very nature of dream narratives which make use of a highly evocative experience common to all humanity always makes them very effective focal points in a narrative.

Another characteristic of the *Continuation* is the strong royal character and dynastic function of nearly all the dream narratives it includes, reflecting the prevalent dynastic concerns of its authors and patrons. Every single dynastic

[94] See above, n. 57.

[95] See above, n. 93.

[96] See Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο' (as above, n. 6), and Calofonos, 'Dream Narratives' (as above, n. 6), for examples from the chronographies of Malalas and Theophanes respectively.

change in the *Continuation*'s narrative is marked by a series of dreams and their companion narratives: the death of Leo V, which ushered in the Amorian dynasty; the end of the Amorians and the rise of the Macedonians; and, finally, even in its last section, a dream that celebrates the Macedonian dynasty's survival, after the failure of Romanos Lekapenos to establish his own dynasty. Such dynastic signposts are often marked with dream narratives in Byzantine chronography, but never to this extent.

In the *Continuation*, the most prominent illustration of this function is – quite predictably – the point in the narrative when the Macedonian dynasty is about to be established, a point signalled initially by the dream of Bardas and its accompanying omens, and then by the remarkable series of four dreams in the *Life of Basil* – which could amount to six, if we consider that the dream narrative of the abbot of St Diomedes contains three recurring dreams. Particularly in the *Life of Basil*, this unprecedented number of dreams comes as a solid block which constitutes the culmination of an extensive series of other short predictive narratives that function as omens and signs of Basil's imperial future. The whole sequence commences with the claims of his triple royal descent from the Arsacids, Constantine the Great and Alexander, which although not predictive as such, they acquire this function within the context of the narrative sequence. This accumulation of predictive narratives builds up the reader's expectations, preparing Basil's triumphant entrance onto the stage of the Constantinopolitan imperial court. Dreams are also present in other texts promoting the Macedonians, but to a much lesser extent. Leo VI's *Funerary Oration* makes do with just a poor man's version of St Diomedes' story while the *Continuation*'s competitor, Genesios, misses one of the dreams.[97]

In the first section of the *Continuation*, even the only two dreams which do not share this function are indirectly connected to the narrative's Macedonian dynastic cause. St Theodora's condensed dream, which at first inspection appears to be serving Amorian dynastic concerns, functions within the *Continuation* in a different way. The Empress Theodora's portrayal as a saintly ruler, who decides on state policy based on guidance received in a dream, foreshadows Basil's extensive reliance on prophetic dreaming for guidance in matters of state, as advertised in his *Life*. The second dream narrative, the miraculous cure, in which St Peter freed Methodios from carnal desire, serves as an introduction of the miraculous abilities of this powerful holy figure who eventually freed Basil from the last two obstacles on his course to the imperial throne, namely Bardas and Michael III. The dream narratives concerning Leo V also participate in this synergy. Through their strong resemblance to Bardas' dream, and by

[97] Leo VI the Wise, *Funerary Oration for His Parents* (as above, n. 77), 203.227–37. Genesios 4.24–25, ed. Thurn, 76–7, including Basil's genealogy, omens of greatness and dreams. The third dream of his mother, however, is omitted.

condemning a true heretic, they enhance still more the authority of the dream of Bardas, which brought the demise of the Amorians.

It is, therefore, all ten dream narratives in the *Continuation* that ultimately serve – either directly or indirectly – to promote the establishment of the Macedonian dynasty. Of central importance in this function is the first dream of Basil's mother, the one which portrays her, like the mother of Cyrus the Great, giving birth to a huge golden plant, which symbolizes the strength of Basil and his line. It conveys a dynastic image which is in tune with the 'classical revival' of the Macedonian emperors and the new secular imagery of imperial power which Constantine VII and his father Leo VI were promoting.[98] Through the dream's dynastic interpretation, the narrative of its fulfilment extends throughout the account of the *Life of Basil* and, beyond it, to the account of all the gilded reigns of the emperors who sprang from this strong golden plant. It ends, rather anticlimactically, nearly two centuries later, with its last gilded – albeit withered – scion, the elderly nun and Empress Theodora.

[98] Cf. Magdalino, 'The Bath of Leo the Wise ... Revisited' (as above, n. 40), 97–118.

Appendix

The Structure of the Continuation of Theophanes *and the Distribution of Dream Narratives*

The Continuation of Theophanes	Dream Narratives	References
Section 1: *Theophanes' Continuation Proper*		Ed. Bekker (1838)
Leo V the Armenian (813–20)	(**1**) Vision of Leo's mother (Blachernai, blood)	1.23, pp. 36.12–37.3
	(**2**) Dream of Leo (Patriarch Tarasios)	1.24, pp. 37.4–38.6
Michael II the Amorian (820–29)		
Theophilos (829–42)		
Michael III (842–67)	(**3**) Dream of Patriarch Methodios (St Peter)	4.10, pp. 159.5–14
	(**4**) Dream/vision of St Theodora (unspecified)	4.14, pp. 162.13–18
	(**5**) Dream of Bardas (St Peter, Patriarch Ignatios)	4.40, pp. 203.12–204.11
Section 2: *The Life of Basil I*		Ed. Ševčenko (2011)
Basil's childhood and young age	(**6**) 1st dream of Basil's mother (golden plant)	8.7–14, pp. 30–32
	(**7**) 2nd dream of Basil's mother (Prophet Elijah)	8.14–28, p. 32
	(**8**) Triple dream of the Abbot of St Diomedes	9.5–40, pp. 34–8
	(**9**) 3rd dream of Basil's mother (golden cypress)	10.1–15, pp. 38–40
Basil I the Macedonian (867–86)		
The Continuation of Theophanes	Dream Narratives	References

Section 3: *Continuation of Theophanes' Continuation*		Ed. Bekker (1838)
(Part A)		
Leo VI the Wise (886–912)		
Alexander (912–3)		
Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–20: Regency)		
Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44)		
(Part B)		
Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (944–59: Sole Emperor)	(**10**) Dream of Romanos Lekapenos (huge fire)	6.[5].4, pp. 438.20–440.14
Romanos II (959–63 – narrative ends in 961)		

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 8

The Historiography of Dreaming in Medieval Byzantium

Paul Magdalino

What can be learned about Byzantine dream culture from the works of Byzantine historians? On first impression, the answer would seem to be, not much. Dream narratives and mentions of dreams occupy very little space in the voluminous pages of Byzantine historical literature. Some texts contain none at all; a significant number record only one dream, while of those that narrate more than three, all but two works achieve this statistic mainly with material drawn from earlier texts, including, of course, the Bible which was a standard source for the universal chronicles that remained the bedrock of history-writing throughout the Middle Ages. Yet the incidence of dreams in historical narratives, and the types of dreams they narrate, afford some insight into the role of dreams in the Byzantine conception of history. The pattern obtained should reveal something of the importance those Byzantine historians and their readers accorded to dreams in the construction and explanation of past events. Admittedly, to say this is to beg two very big questions that cannot be answered in this chapter. First, how does one measure the importance of a Byzantine literary motif – by the frequency, or by the conspicuous singularity, with which it occurs in the composition? By the insistence or the understatement of the author? By its originality, or by the richness of its borrowings, echoes and allusions? Secondly, what was the Byzantines' conception of good history? According to the prefaces of their historical compositions, it was not that different from ours: a sober concern for the plain, unvarnished truth; to tell things the way they really happened, on the basis of eyewitness observation and careful research.[1] They clearly distinguished, in theory, between history writing and rhetorical modes of expression that served to embroider and distort the facts, to whitewash and denigrate the actors. But in practice, they treated historiography as literature that had to edify, entertain and echo other literary works; and they used it, like other forms of literature, as a vehicle for ideological argument and the settling

[1] On the motifs of historical *prooimia*, see I. Grigoriadis, 'A Study of the *Prooimion* of Zonaras' Chronicle in Relation to Other 12th-Century Historical *Prooimia*', *BZ* 91 (1998), 328–44.

of political scores. Thus we have no firm criteria for evaluating the choice of narrative elements inserted by Byzantine historians into their works. Yet we can begin to establish such criteria by doing exactly what is attempted here: to trace a relatively minor motif across a range of historical texts. This can give a perspective in which to judge the literary function and the historicist perception of apparently random or trivial information.

I shall concentrate on the medieval period, and I shall be concerned only with those texts that contain original material; that is, which do not simply derive all their dream narratives from earlier histories. In passing, I would just observe that a comparison of the derivative texts is potentially fruitful, since they range from consistent inclusion to consistent omission of the dream narratives in their sources. At the top of the range, it is interesting to note that Michael Glykas, a convert from occult science, also includes many episodes of astrology, magic and divination in his universal chronicle.[2]

We begin with the tenth-century continuation of Theophanes, in its surviving form a composite work of at least three different authors covering the period 813–961. Its dream narratives are unevenly distributed, with three occurring in books I–IV (on the Emperors Leo V to Michael III), four in book V (the *Vita Basilii*) and only one in the composite book VI that deals with all the subsequent reigns from 886 to 961. The three dreams in the first part are all warnings to wicked rulers, narrated in the context of other signs and prophecies presaging their violent deaths. In the first (*opsis*), the mother of the Iconoclast Emperor Leo V sees herself in the Blachernai church, which is awash with blood.[3] A maiden with white-robed attendants appears to her and gives her a bowl of blood to drink because, she says, of the bloodiness of her son. In the second dream (*opsis nykterinē*), Leo himself is visited by the late Patriarch Tarasios, who orders a certain Michael to kill him – a clear reference to his impending murder by the supporters of his successor Michael II.[4] The third vision (*oneiros*) is that seen by the Caesar Bardas prior to his assassination in 866, and it is prefaced with the remark that this and other portents 'did not just happen by themselves or by any irrational force, but through the providence of him who does not desire the death of the sinner but rather his return'. Bardas saw himself entering Hagia Sophia for a festal liturgy together with the Emperor Michael III, his nephew. There a venerable old man, whom they identified as St Peter, was sitting on the patriarch's throne, with the deposed

[2] Ed. I. Bekker, *Michaelis Glycae Annales* (Bonn, 1836); for Glykas' scientific interests in the chronicle, see R. Macrides and P. Magdalino, 'The Fourth Kingdom and the Rhetoric of Hellenism', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), 131ff.

[3] Theophanes Continuatus (henceforth: *TheophCont*), ed. I. Bekker, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata*, *Symeon Magister*, *Georgius monachus* (Bonn, 1838), 36.

[4] *TheophCont*, ed. Bakker, 37

Patriarch Ignatios at his feet, praying to be vindicated for the wrongs he had suffered. St Peter handed a sword to one of the two attendants wearing gold-embroidered robes, ordering him to put Bardas on the left-hand side and hack him to pieces, and to do the same to Michael, though on the right. The dream thus presaged that both Bardas and Michael would be violently murdered, but that one would be damned and the other saved.[5]

These three dreams are all typically hagiographical, in that they show a holy figure threatening a sinful tyrant with death if he does not mend his ways. They implicitly echo what had become a *topos* of the Saints' Lives written and cited to promote the veneration of icons: the saint is recognisable from the physical features of his or her depiction in painted images. The dreams experienced by Leo V and Bardas are doubly hagiographical because they derive from Saints' Lives: the *Vitae* of the two canonized patriarchs, Tarasios and Ignatios, by Ignatios the Deacon and Niketas David Paphlagon.[6] They represent some of the most striking crossovers between hagiography and history in the whole of Byzantine literature.

Book V of *Theophanes Continuatus*, the biography of the Emperor Basil I commissioned by his grandson Constantine VII, is a different kind of crossover, because although a work of secular history, it presents its subject as a flawless paragon of Christian virtue and piety whose every move is guided by Divine Providence. In this, the four dreams that announce Basil's almost miraculous rise to power are the pendant to the dreams announcing the deaths of Leo V and Bardas. While those dreams were providential last calls to repentance that went unheeded, the divinely induced dreams concerning Basil's destiny were effective in persuading key figures in his life, his mother and the abbot of St Diomedes, to give him the breaks he needed in order to rise to the top.[7] His mother dreamt of a golden tree growing out of her, and of a visit from the Prophet Elijah who told her unambiguously that her son would become emperor.[8] These dreams (*oneiratōn opseis*) convinced her to let him go to Constantinople to fulfil his divine calling. When he arrived at Constantinople and wandered in through the Golden Gate with nowhere to stay, he rested on the steps of the monastery of St Diomedes. The eponymous martyr then appeared to the abbot in a dream (*nyktos onar*) instructing him to go out of the monastery gate and look after the first man who answered to the name of Basil, because this man was

---

[5] *TheophCont*, ed. Bekker, 203–4.

[6] *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon* (*BHG 1698*), ed. and Engl. trans. S. Efthymiadis (Birmingham, 1998), 163–4, 204–5; *Life of Ignatios*, *PG* 105, 533–5.

[7] On these dreams, see G. Moravscik, 'Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I.', *DOP* 15 (1961), 88–92.

[8] *Vita Basilii*, ed. I. Ševčenko, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Liber quo vita Basilii imperatoris amplectur* (Berlin, 2011), 30–32.

'anointed as emperor by God'.[9] When the abbot eventually complied after the third reminder, he not only gave Basil a hot meal and a bath, but also provided him with an introduction to an imperial relative, Theophilitzes, who took him into his service. Meanwhile, Basil's mother was reassured by another dream, this time of a golden cypress tree.[10]

The dreams of the golden trees are clearly laden with royal and dynastic symbolism, and echo the classical tradition concerning Cyrus and the Persian royal dynasty. But the dreams of Elijah and St Diomedes are just as clearly iconic and hagiographical, like those in the narrative concerning Basil's predecessors. They enhance the hagiographical flavour of the biography, not just by their content, but by the fact that dreams were such a common and integral feature of Byzantine Saints' Lives. Their function, however, is not merely to 'canonize' Basil, to legitimize his opportunistic *curriculum vitae* and to give an orthodox religious gloss to a secular story. The dream narratives in the *Vita Basilii* are also there to prove the value of dreams as valid instruments of Divine Providence. This can be inferred from a passage later in the *Life*, where we are told that Basil,

> basing his own plans on those of Divine Providence, was clearly taught many things during his sleep. When he went to bed preoccupied and struggled in his mind over one of the cares of state, he would often see the outcome in a dream (*onar*) and settle the anxiety in his soul. And it is not in any way surprising that those who carry out duty such as wielding earthly power and perform this truly divine service for us here on earth, conforming to the example of perfection as far as is possible, should be encouraged by Providence, directed to what is good, and taught the future in advance.[11]

Book VI, covering the period 886–961, contains only one dream narrative. It is placed in the introduction to the section dealing with the personal reign of Constantine VII (945–59), but it concerns the repentance of his predecessor Romanos I (920–44). In a dream (*kat' onar*), Romanos sees himself being taken, naked, by two eunuchs to the Trikymbalon, a location at the edge of the Palace. The nearby Tzykanisterion is full of fire, and black demons are prodding him

[9] *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko, 34–6. In the earlier version of this story, told by Leo VI in his funeral oration for his father and mother, St Diomedes appears to Basil himself: ed. T. Antopoulou, *Leonis VI sapientis imperatoris byzantini homiliae* (Turnhout, 2008), 203.227–39. In the parallel historical account by Symeon the Logothete, the man who looks after Basil is not the abbot of a monastery, but the concierge (προσμονάριος) of a church, dedicated to St Diomedes, and he is alerted not in a dream but by a voice: ed. S. Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* (Berlin and New York, 2006), 237–8.

[10] *Symeon Magister*, ed. Wahlgren, 225.

[11] *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko, 250; my translation.

into it, when the Theotokos intervenes, tells the eunuchs to let him go because of his charity, puts clothes on him and leads him away. However, two of his high-ranking subjects are not so lucky; he sees them thrust into the fire, and it transpires that they died on the day of his dream. This prompts a public show of repentance before a large assembly of monks, and a huge donation to the monasteries of Mt Olympos, after which the list of his sins is wiped clean.[12]

Like the iconic warning dreams recorded in association with Leo V and Bardas, the dream of Romanos I involves the apparition of a holy person interacting with the dreamer in a recognisable location in Constantinople. It may have been included with conscious reference to those earlier narratives. But in important ways it stands apart from them. It is a vision of hellfire set in the imperial Palace, and in this last respect it is reminiscent of the visions of the afterlife that are a speciality of the tenth century, particularly the vision of the monk Kosmas.[13] At the same time, it has a happy ending for the imperial dreamer, and serves not so much to contrast him with a later 'good' emperor as to link and reconcile the favourable account of his reign with the even more glowing portrait of his successor, Constantine VII, who joined in and benefited from his deposition. Insofar as Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus* constitutes a separate and self-contained part of the compilation, the dream of Romanos is an isolated, if central, element in the narrative. In this, it looks forward to the history writing of the next four centuries.

The dream narratives in Byzantine historiography from ca 1000 to the mid-fourteenth century are listed in the Appendix at the end of this article. The narrated dreams are classified according to the typology that I have identified for *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the concluding table summarizes the results. The list comprises all the 'original' histories produced between 1000 and the mid-fourteenth century, apart from those of Attaleiates and Bryennios, which contain no dream narratives. It also omits mentions of dreams whose visual content is not specified. Of the 11 texts included, six feature only one dream or vision, two contain two dream narratives and only three contain three or more. With the exception of a miraculous cure recounted by Pachymeres,[14] all the dreams are

[12] *TheophCont*, ed. Bekker, 438.

[13] Ed. C. Angelidi, 'La version longue de la vision du moine Cosmas', *AnBoll* 101 (1983), 73–99. On this and related visions of the afterlife, see P. Magdalino, '"What We Heard in the Lives of the Saints We Have Seen with Our Own Eyes": the Holy Man as Literary Text in Tenth-Century Constantinople', in J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999), 83–112, esp. 99–100; A. Timotin, 'L'eschatologie byzantine: historiographie et perspectives de recherche', *RESEE* 41 (2003), 248–52; J. Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium. Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007).

[14] George Pachymeres, ed. A. Failler, *Georges Pachymérès, Relations historiques*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1999), 497–9; see Appendix, below, p. 143, no. 17.

broadly speaking political in that they affect people in power and events of public importance. They fall quite clearly into two categories, the hagiographical-iconic and the symbolic, although there is some overlap in three of the episodes narrated by Skylitzes[15] and in the dreams recorded by Kantakouzenos.[16]

The hagiographical-iconic dreams broadly conform to the model we have seen in *Theophanes Continuatus*; they feature a heavenly figure with a recognizable iconography who interacts directly with the dreamer, either where he or she is sleeping, or, in two cases, in a scene set in the saint's own church – that of St Demetrios in Thessalonike,[17] and that of the Theotokos Kyriotissa in Constantinople.[18] The heavenly figure is usually named, though sometimes, according to an old poetic and hagiographical convention, the identity is meant to be inferred from the iconography and the context: thus the 'marvellous woman' in Skylitzes who hands the imperial whip to Bardas Skleros,[19] and the 'dark-robed woman' in Kinnamos who replaces Manuel Komnenos' blue *sebastokrator* shoes with red imperial ones,[20] are presumably meant to be the Theotokos. She is by far the most frequently dreamed of holy person in all the narratives, and this no doubt reflects both her role as a private intercessor and her status as the supreme 'supernatural defender' of Constantinople and hence, by extension, of the empire.

None of the hagiographical-iconic dreams can be traced to a known hagiographical source, although it seems highly likely that the dream-induced healing miracles narrated by Skylitzes and Pachymeres derived from miracle stories circulating at the shrines of St Nicholas at Myra, and of the Theotokos Hodegetria and St Theodosia in Constantinople.[21] It is also fairly certain that Akropolites' account of the death of the Bulgarian Tsar John Asan, or Kalojan, alludes to the tradition that his dream visitor was St Demetrios. This story was circulating soon after the event, and by the end of the century it had entered the collection of St Demetrios' miracles.[22]

---

[15] John Skylitzes, ed. I. Thurn, *Ioannis Skylitzae, Synopsis Historiarum* (Berlin and New York, 1973), 316–17, 395, 368; see Appendix, below, p. 141, nos 4, 5, 7.

[16] John Kantakouzenos, ed. L. Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri IV*, vol. 2 (Bonn, 1828), 555, 499–501; see Appendix, below, p. 144, nos 22, 23.

[17] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, ed. D.R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* (Berlin and New York, 2001), 155; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 8.

[18] Niketas Choniates, ed. I.A. van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, vol. 1 (Berlin and New York, 1975), 191; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 12.

[19] John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 316–7; see Appendix, below, p. 141, no. 4.

[20] John Kinnamos, ed. A. Meineke, *Ioannis Cinnami Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum* (Bonn, 1836), 23; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 11.

[21] John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 397; George Pachymeres, ed. Failler, vol. 4, 429, 497–99; see Appendix, below, pp. 141, 143, nos 6, 16, 17.

[22] The miracle is narrated by Robert of Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, 116, ed. P. Lauer (Paris, 1924), and by two later Greek authors, John Stavrakios, ed. Ioakeim

The symbolic dreams are those which are narrated as the indirect, allegorical dramatizations of future events. As a rule, they presage disaster, their imagery is purely profane, usually involving animals, and they do not make sense until after the event. The partial exceptions in this last respect are the dream that Anna Komnene attributes to the sultan,[23] which is correctly interpreted by the Byzantine soldier to whom he tells it, and the fairly transparent nightmare experienced by Theodore Metochites, according to Gregoras, of a *lōpodytēs* burgling his strong room with all his valuables.[24] Gregoras is also exceptional in that neither this nor the other dream narrative in his history is of the hagiographical-iconic variety.[25] Other historians record symbolic dreams only in addition to the hagiographical-iconic dreams which, one may conclude, formed the backbone of dream historiography in medieval Byzantium.

But was the function of such dream episodes as hagiographical and providentialist as we found it to be in *Theophanes Continuatus*? For some historians it clearly was: Leo the Deacon, John Skylitzes, Anna Komnene, John Kinnamos and the anonymous thirteenth-century author of the *Synopsis Chronikē* all introduce iconic dreams at climactic moments of their narratives both to enhance the drama and to emphasize the divine sanction of what they are reporting. They also thereby affirm their own political and religious orthodoxy as well as the piety of their heroes and the impiety of their villains. Thus the dream of the Virgin despatching St Theodore to the aid of John Tzimiskes at Dorystolon, reported by Leo the Deacon and Skylitzes,[26] seals the emperor's victory as the culmination of a military narrative, as the expression of Tzimiskes' personal devotion to his local and Eastern military saint,[27] and as a representation of official ideology on several levels. It dramatizes the concept of the empire's dependence on a heavenly hierarchy that operates like the earthly court. It affirms the role of the Virgin Mother of God as the commander-in-chief (*hypermachos stratēgos*) who defends Constantinople and grants the emperor

---

Ivirites, "Ἰωάννου Σταυρακίου Λόγος εἰς τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου', *Μακεδονικά* 1 (1940), 369–72, and Constantine Akropolites (George's son), ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, vol. 1, (St Petersburg, 1891), 211–3. See R. Macrides, *George Akropolites, The History* (Oxford, 2007), 143–4.

[23] *Alexiad*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, 479; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 10.

[24] Nikephoros Gregoras, ed. L. Schopen, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, vol. 1 (Bonn, 1829), 412; see Appendix, below, p. 143, no. 20.

[25] Nikephoros Gregoras, ed. Schopen, vol. 2 (Bonn, 1831) 2, 705–6; see Appendix, below, p. 144, no. 21.

[26] Leo the Deacon, ed. C.B. Hase, *Leonis diaconi, Historiae Libri X* (Bonn, 1828), 154; John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 309. See Appendix, below, p. 141, nos 1, 3.

[27] Cf. J.-C. Cheynet, *La société byzantine. L'apport des sceaux*, vol. 1 (Paris, 2008), 307–22; J. Cotsonis, 'The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth–Twelfth Century)', *Byzantion* 75 (2005), 447ff.

victory in the field: a role that John Tzimiskes publicly acknowledged in the triumph with which he celebrated his return to Constantinople, by yielding the place of honour in the triumphal chariot to the icon of the Virgin.[28] Finally, the dream reflects the growing cult of the military saints that accompanied the increasing sanctification of war in tenth-century Byzantium.[29]

Two of the three iconic dreams for which Skylitzes is the sole source serve to explain that the civil wars of Basil II's early years and the natural disasters of Michael IV's reign were divine punishments,[30] but the third balances the negative comment on Michael IV with the information that the emperor's brother and head of his administration, John the Orphanotrophos, was personally and spontaneously favoured by St Nicholas.[31] St Nicholas was the patron saint not only of orphans, but also of bureaucrats, as is clear from the titles of a large proportion (43 per cent) of the individuals who chose to portray him on their lead seals;[32] he was the equivalent of the military saints adopted by military officers. This may explain Skylitzes' interest in the episode; it may also have been due to the generosity to St Nicholas' church at Myra, including the fortification of the town, which the Orphanotrophos showed in gratitude for his cure.[33]

The two iconic dreams in the *Alexiad* are both connected with the Norman threat to the empire under Alexios I, and they both announce the ultimate defeat of Alexios' arch-enemy Bohemond. The first is a promise of victory after a series of defeats, and it is made by the major military saint, Demetrios of Thessalonike, most appropriate to the European theatre of war.[34] The second provides an explanation of a troubling omen in the form of a comet that shone for 40 days; its appearance is revealed to portend an invasion of Kelts, and its extinction to herald their dissolution.[35] That the warning and the promise of deliverance are

---

[28] Leo the Deacon, ed. Hase, 158–9; John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 310. Cf. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), 174; B.V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), chapter 3.

[29] C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot, 2003); Cotsonis, 'Contribution', 448–73; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 81–97.

[30] John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 316–17, 395; see Appendix, below, p. 141, nos 4, 5.

[31] John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 397; see Appendix, below, p. 141, no. 6.

[32] Cotsonis, 'Contribution', 433–7; they included John himself, as is noted by J.-C. Cheynet in the French translation of Skylitzes by B. Flusin, *J. Skylitzès*, *Empereurs de Constantinople* (Paris, 2003), 329 n. 23.

[33] John Skylitzes, ed. Thurn, 397; for the history of Myra in the eleventh century and evidence of building activity in the town and the church of St Nicholas, see H. Hellenkemper and F. Hild, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 2004), 348, 356–7, and bibliography cited.

[34] *Alexiad*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, 155; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 8; Cheynet, *La société byzantine*, 308–9, 313–5.

[35] *Alexiad*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, 368–9; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 9.

provided by a dream appearance of St John the Theologian not only gives them the seal of divine approval, and indeed divine causation, but also divests the omen of any astrological significance and its interpretation of any expertise in occult science. I have suggested elsewhere that Anna Komnene develops the episode in order to reinforce her denial, first expressed in connection with the death of Robert Guiscard, that her father attached any importance to astrological predictions.[36] We should note, too, that St John the Theologian makes an earlier visionary appearance in the *Alexiad*: a venerable priest looking just like him appears to Alexios in a waking vision to tell him that he will become emperor.[37] The iconic dream narratives in the *Alexiad* thus underline both the providential destiny of the hero and the Orthodoxy of his faith in Divine Providence. Their function is thrown into relief by the later narrative of the dream dreamed by the infidel sultan;[38] this is a symbolic dream, of mice and lions, and the sultan fails to heed its warning.

In the same providentialist vein is Kinnamos' story of the anonymous dream lady bestowing the imperial purple on the young Manuel Komnenos.[39] Like the accompanying story of the holy man from Galilee who, when visiting the imperial palace, spotted Manuel as the future emperor among the four sons of John II, it is clearly meant to show that his very unexpected elevation to the throne was pre-ordained, and that his investiture was even performed by the Theotokos herself.

Finally, the dream of St Tryphon that the anonymous thirteenth-century chronicle attributes to Theodore II pointedly confers divine sanction on this emperor and his expedition against the Bulgarians.[40] It is all the more pointed for being an interpolation to the original narrative by George Akropolites that the chronicler incorporates in his text. Along with the other interpolated passages in which the chronicler praises Theodore II, underlining in particular his fervent devotion to the Nicaean martyr St Tryphon, it is a deliberately political statement of dissent from Akropolites' less than enthusiastic account of Theodore's reign.[41] It evokes a special relationship between the emperor and the saint not unlike that which Leo the Deacon and Skylitzes describe for John I

---

[36] P. Magdalino, 'Occult Science and Imperial Power in Byzantine History and Historiography (9th–12th Centuries)', in P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium* (Geneva, 2007), 145.

[37] *Alexiad*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, 74–5.

[38] *Alexiad*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, 479; see Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 10.

[39] John Kinnamos, ed. Meineke, 23; Appendix, below, p. 142, no. 11.

[40] Anonymus (Theodore Skoutariotes?), *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Georgii Acropolitae Opera* (Leipzig, 1903; 2nd edn Stuttgart, 1978), 291–2; see Appendix, below, p. 143, no. 15.

[41] On the historians' different political viewpoints, and on Theodore's veneration of St Tryphon, see Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 65–9, 284–5.

and St Theodore: the chronicler adds that Theodore II 'in difficult moments, as he affirmed, often saw [St Tryphon] at the head of his forces, not in a dream but in reality (*hypar ouk onar*)'.

This does not exhaust the list of hagiographical-iconic dreams in the historians we are considering, but the others do not conform to the same pattern. The two recorded by Pachymeres are both connected with healing miracles,[42] and neither seems to be making a political comment, except insofar as the recovery of Michael IX answered the prayers and therefore reflected the piety of his father, the otherwise ineffective Andronikos II. Both dreams are providentialist, and Pachymeres says that he includes the miracle of St Theodosia in order to demonstrate God's continuing providential care – but care for mankind, not for the empire or the emperor.

The other three dream narratives in the hagiographical-iconic category can only be described as subversive of the genre in their different ways. Psellos narrates a fake dream as part of his long send-up of Constantine IX Monomachos.[43] He does not say that the dream supposedly involved the agency of a saint, but this can perhaps be inferred from the fact that the dream is the answer to the question 'who stole my horse?' Although the question could have been asked of a demon via a sorcerer, only prayer to a saint via his icon could elicit an Orthodox answer, and only a saint could produce a bona fide dream that one could confidently report to the emperor. The incident is reminiscent of the well-known miracle of St Artemios in which the saint reveals to the dreamer who has stolen his cloak.[44]

Akropolites subverts the genre by alluding to what is clearly a miracle of St Demetrios without naming the saint, and without giving him, or divine providence, unambiguous credit for the event – Kalojan's death by divine judgement was just what 'some people said'. His readers no doubt knew the legend, and one can only speculate as to why he chose to serve them this distinctly downbeat version of it – was he trying to assume the critical objectivity expected of an historian, perhaps in order to add credibility to his partisan, over-the-top characterizations in later passages of his history?[45]

---

[42] George Pachymeres, ed. Failler, vol. 4, 429, 497–9; see Appendix, below, p. 143, nos 16, 17.

[43] Michael Psellos, ed. E. Renauld, *Michel Psellos, Chronographie*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1967), 39–40; see Appendix, below, p. 141, no. 2.

[44] *Miracles of Artemios* 18, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia Graeca Sacra* (St Petersburg, 1909; repr. Leipzig, 1975), 20–23; reprinted with translation and commentary by V.S. Crisafulli and J. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St Artemios* (Leiden, 1997), 114–21. On this and similar miracles of other saints, see S. Efthymiades, 'A Day and Ten Months in the Life of a Lonely Bachelor: The Other Byzantium in *Miracula Sancti Artemii* 18 and 22', *DOP* 58 (2004), 1–26, esp. 5–8.

[45] Cf. Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 54–5.

The prize for the best subversive dream narrative must, however, go to Niketas Choniates for his account of the dream scene set in the church of the Virgin Kyriotissa,[46] in which the Theotokos debates with the off-stage voice of God over who is to go to the aid of the Emperor Manuel at Myriokephalon She concludes that neither of the top Eastern generals at their court, St Theodore and St George, will get there in time to save the situation.

> On the same day of those unfortunate events, a bilingual man approached him [Manuel], Greek by race, Mavropoulos by name, and told him of a dream in which he had seemed to enter the church that takes its name from Kyros. As he was praying to the icon of the Mother of God, a voice came from thence to his ears saying that, 'Now the emperor is truly in the greatest of danger, and who will go to fight beside him?' An unseen person said, 'Let George go', to which she replied, 'He's a slowcoach'. When the other rejoined, 'Then let Theodore go', she said no to him as well. Finally she painfully acknowledged that no one would be able to anticipate the disaster that was in the making.[47]

The scene most obviously subverts the conventional Byzantine faith in the Theotokos and the military saints, who were consistently portrayed in official rhetoric and iconography of the Comnenian period as the emperor's constant, reliable companions in arms. Although the ultimate message of the dream, that the court of heaven decided to withhold its aid on this occasion, is perfectly orthodox, it is hardly expressed in the most explicit or reverential way. Rather than scrutinizing the sins by which Manuel and his subjects had incurred divine displeasure, the account focuses entirely on the somewhat capricious, last-minute decision-making process in heaven, where the saintly generals are suggested and then dismissed on the grounds of their human limitations. It is a very human scenario which, like the Homeric portrayal of the debates on Mt Olympos, brings the court of heaven down to earth. It may well reflect a 'folk' view of heaven, in which heavenly figures are seen matter-of-factly as patrons distinguished from ordinary mortals only by their power and paraphernalia. It surely reflects the reality of the earthly court, and in this it pricks the bubble of solemn representation on both the religious and the political levels.

The subversiveness of Choniates' narrative becomes fully apparent when it is compared with the straight iconic dream related by Leo the Deacon.[48] There

[46] Now identified with the Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul: see A. Berger in C.L. Striker and Y. Doğan Kuban (eds), *Kalenderhane in Istanbul. The Buildings* (Mainz, 1997), 7–15, with the review by C. Mango in *BZ* 91 (1998), 586–90.

[47] Niketas Choniates, ed. van Dieten, vol. 1, 191; see Appendix, below, p. 142, nos 12 and 13.

[48] The association, though not the subversion, is noted by Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 68–9.

the dream is seen by a pious virgin; here it is reported by an ordinary, if pious and bilingual, layman. There the heavenly chain of command works quickly and decisively; here it breaks down in inconclusive discussion. But the differences in the narratives are enhanced by the striking similarity of the initial scenario, and particularly in the words spoken by the Theotokos. In Leo the Deacon, she tells St Theodore that the emperor 'is now in a grave situation ... if you do not get there in time, he will be in great danger'. In Choniates, she says, 'The emperor is now in great danger, and who will go to help him fight?' This similarity, in my opinion, indicates one of two things: either dreams of this kind were a ritual that occurred, or was invented retrospectively, on the eve of every imperial victory, or Choniates had read Leo the Deacon and was consciously alluding to him. On balance, the second explanation seems more plausible, firstly because it is clear from Anna Komnene that eve-of-victory dreams could follow a different formula, and, secondly, because of another passage where Choniates echoes the wording of Leo the Deacon even more closely.[49]

Apart from the subversive narrating of iconic dreams by these three historians from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, can any new general trend be observed in the medieval Byzantine historiography of dreams? I would suggest that a significant development occurs in the history writing of the fourteenth century. The last three historians in the group, Pachymeres, Gregoras and Kantakouzenos, have one notable new feature in common. All show a new tendency to record dreams as digressions from rather than contributions to the propaganda and the plot; they are reported because the narrative gives them significance, not because they add significance to the narrative. Although the two iconic dreams in Pachymeres are functional elements in miracle stories, he reports them because they happened, for their own sake. The same is true of his two accounts of symbolic dreams, which he presents in ways that underline their veracity. In one, the Patriarch John Bekkos claimed to have seen ten officials of the Great Church riding fast towards a river which they crossed in the order of their subsequent deaths within the next nine months; in the other, a courtier of Andronikos II saw Turks mounted on camels flying from Skoutari over to the European side of the Bosphoros. Of the former, Pachymeres remarks that Bekkos was by nature honest, and swore on oath that his dream was true. In the case of the flying Turks on camels, Pachymeres recalls the dream in connection with events of years later which, in his opinion, represent its fulfilment, although the way he tells them, they do not appear to fit very well. In both cases, the point of narrating the dream is to

[49] Leo the Deacon, ed. Hase, 83–84; Niketas Choniates, ed. van Dieten, 445. Both passages describe houses – I believe the same house – near the port of Julian in Constantinople: see P. Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople', in his *Studies on the History and Topography of Medieval Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), pt. I, 52.

prove that it had premonitory significance, and not to enhance the significance of the narrated events.

The lengthy *Roman History* of Nikephoros Gregoras contains only two original dream narratives, which is remarkable for a writer who also wrote a commentary on Synesios' treatise *On dreams* and thus presumably had a more than average interest in the subject.[50] The first passage reports a nightmare experienced by Theodore Metochites, the chief minister of Andronikos II and Gregoras' intellectual mentor. Metochites is said to have dreamed of a burglar seizing his keys from under his pillow and robbing his treasure-chamber. The dream is likely to have been genuine, since Gregoras was a frequent visitor to the Metochites household, if not actually resident there at the time, and could have heard the story not only from the man himself but also from his servants whom he awakened with his cries to stop the thief. They found all the doors to be locked, and assured him that what he had seen was a fantasy and the projection of his daytime cares. But when Metochites came to himself, in Gregoras' words:

> he let out a deep heartfelt groan as he realised that the apparition was not so much a projection of daytime cares, as a forecast and prediction of the future destruction that would overtake his house. Whence, at daybreak he removed most of his money from his house, as if this was already condemned, and distributed it among his most trusted friends for them to guard.[51]

Of interest here is the fact that the reflective intellectual's considered reaction, on 'coming to', was not to be content with the rational explanation that the dream fantasy was caused by routine psychological stress, but to conclude that it must have deeper premonitory significance. In this, both Metochites and Gregoras were clearly in agreement with Synesios' view of the *eidōla* seen in dreams.

The other original dream narrative in Gregoras' work occurs in his account of the civil war of 1341–47, which John Kantakouzenos, after his assumption of the imperial title, fought with the regency government of John V Palaiologos. The regency government had just won over the half-Bulgarian warlord and bandit-chief Momcilo, who now awaited his opportunity to attack Kantakouzenos. It came when Kantakouzenos left the fortress of Komotini and encamped near Mosynopolis. It was springtime, and Gregoras' lyrically evokes the flowering trees and lush meadows. This creates a suitable atmosphere for the dream episode he goes on to relate in a digression, before returning abruptly to the subject of Momcilo:

---

[50] Ed. P. Pietrosanti, *Nicephori Gregorae Explicatio in librum Synesii 'De insomniis'* (Bari, 1999).

[51] Nikephoros Gregoras, ed. Schopen, 412; see Appendix, below, p. 143, no. 20.

> [Kantakouzenos] happened upon a tree somewhere nearby, which had broad branches forming a kind of roof that provided deep shade for the ground and stood in the way of the sun's excessive glare. Under the tree bubbled up a spring into a pool of water so limpid that it reproduced the beauty of the tree in an exact image, and there appeared to be two trees growing from the same root, one above, one below; one rising up above us, the other suspended beneath the earth. Lying down under this tree for a while, the emperor fell asleep, and seemed to hear a voice from an invisible source, saying, 'Get up, sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'. Then it seemed that he awoke, and stood up in a daze. A creator of songs was there, who tuned his lyre expertly and struck up a song to catch everyone's attention. And the words of the song were these, 'O men who resemble this tree and this shade, now that you are in season and have not yet gone off to wither and perish with the approach of winter, let us rejoice and take pleasure in youth before it gets trampled in the dance of death'.[52]

The episode is problematic compared with all the earlier dream narratives we have looked at. It is a pure digression, and makes no obvious sense in terms of the main narrative, except perhaps as a meditation on spring. Both the voice and the singer were clearly apparitions experienced during sleep, yet Gregoras does not describe the experience as a dream, nor does he insist, like Pachymeres, on the veracity of his source. The lack of logical connection between the two apparitions is suggestive of a real dream. On the other hand, the fact that Gregoras uses the description of the singer and the song in another literary piece, the *Philomathes*, suggests that it is a literary invention.[53] Moreover, it is odd that the reported dreamer did not mention the dream in his own narrative of the same events. This was not because he regarded dreams as insignificant. On the contrary, the two dream narratives that John VI Kantakouzenos did include in his *History* show beyond doubt that he shared Gregoras' assumption that dreams were conveyors of important messages.

Kantakouzenos attributes the first dream he narrates to himself. It is patently iconic and providentialist, and it confirms the auto-hagiographical tenor of the work, which is essentially a long apologia for the author's usurpation of power.[54] However, its iconography is original, and its autobiographical reporting confirms its authenticity, especially since the 'victory' it announces was a fairly unspectacular event, even by the low standards of the Byzantine civil wars of the fourteenth century, and hardly the climax of the narrative.

---

[52] John Kantakouzenos, ed. Schopen, vol. 2, 705–6; see Appendix, below, p. 144, no. 21.

[53] Ed. P.L.M. Leone, '*Il Φιλομαθὴς ἢ περὶ ὑβριστῶν* di Niceforo Gregora', *RSBN* 8–9 (1971–2), 171–201, at 197–8.

[54] John Kantakouzenos, ed. Schopen, vol. 2, 555; see Appendix, below, p. 144, no. 22.

The second dream reported by the author's son Manuel is unique in Byzantine historiography on several counts. It is said to have been reported in writing. It is not related to any other event in the narrative. It gives an immediate impression of being iconic and hagiographical through its description of a solemn ritual accompanied by readings from the Bible, yet it features no angel or saint, and it conveys no explicit message.

> Manuel, the younger of the emperor's sons who was living at Berroia, wrote that he saw the following dream. He seemed to be sitting on a couch; his father the emperor, wearing a *loros* and purple tunic and a golden priestly stole, was coming towards him, with two other men following him on either side. One, who was unknown to him, carried the open book of the prophet Isaiah; the other, Lanzaretos, held the emperor's sword in his hands. Handing his son some wax and a seal, both red, the emperor said to him, 'Seal'. As he sealed, a live lion was imprinted on the wax, holding a bright star with his right foot, and having another bright star embedded in his shoulder. The emperor said, 'Raise it up'. When his son raised it up, the man holding the book of Isaiah said, 'God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn; he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee' (Num. 24.8–9). He seemed to be reading this from what was written in the book. The emperor again ordered his son to seal. As he sealed, a live leopard appeared and it had a paper in one of its feet, on which was written, 'Behold another beast, like a leopard, and power was given unto it' (Dan. 7.6). When the emperor ordered the man who was holding the book to tell the prophecy of the beast, he said the same words. The emperor ordered his son to seal a third time, and as he sealed, there emerged a cat, also live, which seemed to lick the earth with its tongue projecting beyond its teeth. When emperor's son lifted it up, the cat's tongue appeared to grow longer and to continue licking the earth. When the emperor commanded the man holding the book to read the prophecy, 'Behold another beast', he said, 'and they said thus unto it, "Arise, devour much flesh" (Dan. 7.5).' After this, the emperor gave his son another seal, a green one, and ordered him to seal the wax with it. As he sealed, there emerged a live stork, holding a glass cup in its foot. The man holding the book said, 'They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Ps. 68.22). And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced (Zech 12.10, Joh. 19.7)'. Again, the emperor's son pressed the seal when commanded, and a centaur emerged, holding a spear in his right hand. The man who spoke the prophecies said, 'Behold another beast, amazing and exceedingly strong' (Dan. 7.7). After this the emperor said, 'Blessed be our God always, now and for ever and unto the ages of ages, Amen. Glory to thee, O God, that we are living to see the prophecies come to pass'. He then appeared to order

> his son to cover the animals, and they at once appeared to be wax seals that could be covered with the hands. He then went out with the emperor his father, who took off his priestly stole. With this, he awoke from his sleep.
>
> This is what the vision revealed to the emperor's son; what it was all about has not yet become clear to this day. This is what the emperor's son wrote to his father that he had seen in his sleep.[55]

The dream is symbolic, but its symbolism is opaque, and it uses animal imagery in a completely original way. What seems to guarantee its authenticity, above all, is its surrealism. It is surreal not only in the way the animals come alive and then revert to being sealed images, but more particularly in the details of the ritual, which correspond to no recognizable ceremony: John Kantakouzenos wears a priestly stole on top of his imperial vestments; the book is advertised as that of the prophet Isaiah, and yet all the readings turn out to be from other parts of the Old Testament.

To top it all, nobody knows what it means. This makes it a very rare event, if not a hapax, not just in history writing, but in the whole of Byzantine literature. The closest we come to it, at least in medieval Byzantine history writing, is the dream of John Kantakouzenos related by Gregoras,[56] for this too is slightly surreal, is unexplained and has no significance for the main narrative. Given that the narrator of one dream is also the alleged dreamer of the other, it would not be fanciful to suppose that some kind of intertextuality is at work, at least on the level of personal discussion between the authors.[57] The contextual similarities of the two rare dream narratives suggest that their differences in content, and their apparent lack of interdependence, reflect deliberately contrasting choices from the same pool of information. They reflect an intellectual milieu in which people informed each other of their unusual dreams, and treated these dreams not merely as signifiers of important events, but as historical phenomena in their own right.

---

[55] John Kantakouzenos, ed. Schopen, vol. 2, 499–501; see Appendix, below, p. 144, no. 23.

[56] Nikephoros Gregoras, ed. Schopen, vol. 2, 705–6; see Appendix, below, p. 144, no. 21.

[57] This is quite plausible in view of the fact that the authors had been friends and correspondents in the years before the civil war of 1341–47, and remained on speaking terms until their final breach over Palamism in 1350: see R. Guilland, *Essai sur Nicéphore Grégoras* (Paris, 1926), 30–33, 94–100. Gregoras had presented Kantakouzenos with a copy of his commentary on Synesios' *On Dreams*: *Nicephori Gregorae epistulae*, ed. P.L.M. Leone (Matino, 1982), no. 120, vol. 1, 312–4.

Appendix

Dream Narratives in Byzantine Historians, ca 1000–1360

Author / Date	Hagiographical / Iconic	Allegorical / Symbolic	Subversive	Total
Leo the Deacon (ca 1000), ed. Hase	**1** A virgin nun in Constantinople sees in her sleep a vision (ὕπαρ) of the Theotokos ordering St Theodore to go to the aid of John I against the Rus at Dorystolon (p. 154).			**1**
Michael Psellos (ca 1060), ed. Renault	**2** The identity of a thief revealed by a divine figure? (vol. 2, pp. 39–40).		**2** Bogus dream (ὄναρ, ἐνύπνιον), related by Constantine IX's 'buffoon' (Romanos Boilas), of his missing horse being ridden by a certain eunuch (vol. 2, p. 40).	**1**
John Skylitzes (ca 1081–1100), ed. Thurn	**3** Dream (ὄναρ) of St Theodore helping John I at Dorystolon (= **1**) (p. 309). **4** Nocturnal vision (ὄψις νυκτερινή) of a monk who sees a marvellous woman handing Bardas Skleros the imperial whip. This was not the symbol of imperial power, as he thought, but of God's wrath against the empire (pp. 316–7). **5** Vision (οὐκ ὄναρ ἀλλ' ὕπαρ) of a servant of the bishop of Pergamon: a radiant eunuch in white robes is ordered to empty three bags full of noxious pests, in punishment for Michael IV's crime against Romanos III (p. 395). **6** John the Orphanotrophos, suffering from a mouth ulcer, has a dream (ὄναρ) of St Nicholas ordering him to go to Myra for a cure (p. 397).	**4** **7** (in some MSS) The Patriarch Eustathios, resting during the Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, sees in a vision (ὕπαρ) a procession of beasts in liturgical vestments entering the sanctuary (p. 368).		**5**

Author / Date	Hagiographical / Iconic	Allegorical / Symbolic	Subversive	Total
Anna Komnene (ca 1148), ed. Reinsch and Kambylis	**8** Before the battle of Larissa, Alexios I in a dream (ὄνειρος) sees himself in the church of St Demetrios at Thessalonike and is encouraged by the saint who appears to speak from one of the hanging icons (p. 155). **9** Asked by Alexios to interpret a newly appeared comet, Basil the eparch of Constantinople sees in his sleep St John the Theologian. Thinking this is not a dream but a real vision (οὐκ ὄναρ ἀλλ' ὕπαρ), he enquires what the comet portends. The saint explains that its appearance and waning signify Bohemond's invasion and defeat (p. 368–9).	**10** The refugee sultan Shahinshah, returning to Ikonion, has a dream (ὄνειρος) of mice snatching the food from his hands, then turning into lions when he brushes them aside, and overpowering him. The emperor's soldier accompanying him suggests that they represent his enemies. The sultan fatally dismisses the idea (p. 479).		**3**
John Kinnamos (ca 1182), ed. Meineke	**11** Manuel Komnenos has a dream (ὄναρ) of a woman bringing him red imperial shoes to exchange for his blue sebastokrator's buskins (p. 23).			**1**
Niketas Choniates (ca 1195), ed. Van Dieten	**12** After the battle of Myriokephalon, a certain Mavropoulos tells the emperor of a dream in which he saw himself entering the church *tou Kyrou*. As he prayed to the icon of the Theotokos, he heard her say, 'The emperor is in great danger, and who will go to help him?' A voice replied suggesting George and then Theodore, but she rejected them both and concluded sadly that no one could forestall the imminent disaster (vol. 1, p. 191).	**13** After the battle of Myriokephalon, Manuel recalls a dream in which he had seen himself crossing the Sea of Marmara in a warship with a large entourage. The mountains of Europe and Asia had suddenly collided, destroying the ship and all its passengers; he had only just managed to struggle ashore (vol. 1, p. 190).	**12** Mavropoulos' dream.	**2**
George Akropolites (ca 1265–70), ed. Heisenberg	**14** When the Bulgarian Tsar John Asan carried his campaign of conquest to Thessalonike he was suddenly struck by pleuritis. Some said this was by divine judgement, since he had dreamed of an armed man standing over him and piercing his side with a spear (vol. 1, p. 23).		**14**	**1**

Author / Date	Hagiographical / Iconic	Allegorical / Symbolic	Subversive	Total
(Theodore Skoutariotes?), *Synopsis Chronike*, add. to Akropolites (1270–1300), ed. Heisenberg	**15** Theodore II Laskaris, already eager to lead an expedition against the Bulgarians, is further encouraged by St Tryphon whom he sees in his sleep (vol. 1, pp. 291–2).			**1**
George Pachymeres (ca 1308), ed. Failler	**16** Michael IX, lying ill at Pegai, dreams (ἐξ ὄνείρων χρηστῶν) that a nobly dressed woman removes a nail from the afflicted part, and tells him that a monk has just disembarked bringing him gifts from the Mother of God. The monk had in fact been despatched by his father, Andronikos II, who had made fervent prayer to the Virgin (vol. 4, p. 429). **17** St Theodosia appears in a dream (κατ'ὄναρ) to a deaf and dumb boy, servant of a certain Pegonites living near the Holy Apostles. She tells him to come to her church with wax and incense; when he does so he is cured (vol. 4, p. 497–9).	**18** The patriarch John Bekkos has a dream (ὄναρ) presaging the deaths of ten church officials in nine months. After a long journey on horseback, they reach a river, which they cross in the order of their subsequent decease. Bekkos was by nature truthful, and swore this on oath (vol. 1, p. 171). **19** A courtier of Andronikos II has a dream (ὄψις ὄνείρου) of Turks arriving at Skoutari on camels, which then fly across the Bosphoros. Many years later, at the time of the Catalan terror, this is fulfilled (vol. 4, p. 669).		**4**
Nikephoros Gregoras (ca 1340), ed. Schopen		**20** Theodore Metochites has a nightmare (ἐνύπνιον) of a burglar taking his keys from his pillow and emptying his treasure-chamber. He cries out to his servants to stop the thief; they assure him that all the doors are locked and the dream is just the product of his daytime worries. On coming to, he reflects that it may rather be the premonition of future disasters (vol. 1, p. 412).		**2**

Author / Date	Hagiographical / Iconic	Allegorical / Symbolic	Subversive	Total
Nikephoros Gregoras (ca 1340), ed. Schopen		**21** Encamped near Mosynopolis, John Kantakouzenos falls asleep under a shady tree. It appears to him that he hears a voice telling him to arise, and that he awakes in a daze to find a man beside him playing a lyre and singing a song about the transience of youth (vol. 2, pp. 705–6).		
John Kantakouzenos (ca 1360), ed. Schopen	**22** JK sees two radiant youths covering him with a purple cloth embroidered with a golden cross and the legend IC XC NIKA. At that very time a traitor to his cause perished (vol. 2, p. 555).	**22** **23** JK's son Manuel writes from Berroia with an account of a recent dream (ὄναρ). He sees himself sitting on a couch; his father comes to him, dressed in imperial vestments and a priestly stole, and followed by two men, one holding a sword and the other the book of Isaiah. He hands Manuel some wax and a seal and orders him to impress the wax. A live lion emerges, and the man with the book reads out a prophecy. This is repeated for a leopard and a cat, then, using a green seal, a stork and a centaur. JK gives a blessing, and orders his son to cover up the animals, which then become waxen images. JK takes off his stole and they leave. No one has yet understood the significance of the dream (vol. 2, pp. 499–501).		2

Chapter 9

The Dream-Key Manuals of Byzantium

Steven M. Oberhelman

A form of Byzantine divination used by all strata of Byzantine society was the dream-key manual, or the *oneirokritikon*.[1] The *oneirokritikon* was a compendium of dream symbols and their interpretations, listed in alphabetical order or in paragraph format. The purpose of the interpretations was to reveal to the reader (invariably male) what future good or evil would befall him, his family and friends or to give him information on current circumstances like health and illness, finances and business. Byzantine dream-key manuals varied considerably in length, from a few folia to several hundred pages. The *oneirokritika* were constructed specifically for handy use: one only needed to recall his dream – or whatever image in the dream seems remarkable and worthy of decoding – and then scan down the list of symbols for that dream or symbol and then read the interpretation assigned to it. The symbols and their meanings could be stated as a simple equivalence: 'x means y'; thus, 'Blood flowing from your mouth signifies loss'.[2] Or, the dream symbol could be written as a protasis, with the interpretation given in the apodosis; for example, 'If you dream that you were phallically penetrated, consider this as the loss of your wife'.[3] As in these examples, the interpretation was most often universally applied, that is, a dream has but one meaning and outcome; in the case of the dream-key manual of Daniel, we are told that anyone who dreams of being penetrated by a penis will lose his wife. Of course, not everyone who would have such a dream is necessarily a man and,

---

[1] For the Byzantine dream-key manuals, see the bibliography in S.M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium. Six Oneirocritica in Translation, with Commentary and Introduction* (Aldershot, 2008). For Byzantine divination and magic, see R. Greenfield, 'A Contribution to the Study of Palaeologan Magic', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, DC, 1995), 117–53. See also the essays in P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium* (Geneva, 2007), esp. M. Mavroudi's essay, 'Occult Science and Society in Byzantium. Considerations for Future Research', 20–72. In this chapter I shall be sparing in citation of secondary scholarship because of considerations of space.

[2] Germanos 18, ed. F. Drexl, 'Ὀνειροκριτικὸν τοῦ πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κυροῦ Γερμανοῦ', *Λαογραφία* 7 (1923), 434; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 154.

[3] *Daniel* 357, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das Traumbuch des Propheten Daniel nach dem cod. Vatic. Palat. Gr. 319', *BZ* 26 (1926), 308; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 101.

moreover, not every man is married. Such was the main flaw of the Byzantine dream-key manuals: it is impossible to set down every single image that can conceivably occur in a dream – and, even more, if a symbol is supposed to have different meanings for different dreamers, as oneirocritics (ancient Byzantine and medieval Arabic) claimed,[4] how could all possible interpretations be listed in a single text? Would not any catalogue necessarily be infinite? After all, a dreamer may be Greek, Egyptian or any nationality; the dreamer could be a king, soldier, merchant, famer, slave or practice some other trade; the dreamer could differ in physical characteristics like health, sex, gender orientation, age, impairment and so on, ad infinitum. In recognition of the variable value of dream symbols, dream-key writers did try to offer prognostications for different dreamers, but when they did, they typically limited themselves to simple contrasts. For example, 'Having one's feet secured by shackles is a good dream for slaves and the poor, but an evil dream for wealthy people';[5] or, 'Trees that have been cut down mean loss if you are free but profit if you are a slave'.[6] Most oneirocritics rarely pursued such multivalent interpretations, however; only the most foolhardy interpreter would have tried to be exhaustive in covering a topic, for their efforts would always fall woefully short.

And a final point: why would a man who dreams of being penetrated lose his wife? The Hellenistic Greek interpreter Artemidoros used analogy to interpret a somewhat similar dream, when he wrote:

> A man dreamt that his penis was covered with hair and that a thick shaggy fur suddenly started to grow on it all the way up to the farthest point of the tip. The man was a notorious *kinaidos* (a man who assumed traditional woman's roles) and indulged in every form of licentious pleasure, except that he did not use his penis, as men customarily do. Accordingly, this part of his body was so inactive that even hairs grew on it. For it was not rubbed against any other body.[7]

If we apply Artemidoros' analogy to the Daniel, entry 357, the interpretation of a penetrated man losing his wife could be explained like this: a man who indulges in passive homosexual intercourse does not need a wife because he does not use his penis. But Daniel's text does not say that the man was in waking life a passive partner in a homoerotic relationship, nor does it say whether the man had been raped in the dream, which could explain why he dreamt of being

[4] For example, Artemidoros 1.2, 4.1, ed. R.A. Pack, *Artemidori Daldiani onirocriticon libri v* (Leipzig, 1963); Achmet, 301, ed. F. Drexl, *Achmetis Oneirocriticon* (Leipzig, 1925), 240–241.

[5] *Daniel* 430, ed. Drexl, 311; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 109.

[6] *Anonymous Dreambook* 56, ed. F. Drexl, 'Das anonyme Traumbuch des Cod. Paris. Gr. 2511', *Λαογραφία* 8 (1921), 353; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 170.

[7] Artemidoros 5.65.

penetrated. Daniel only says that someone who dreams of being phallically penetrated will lose his wife.[8] That is all. Much, too much, is not said.

Before the age of Byzantium, there were many ancient Greek and Roman dream-key manuals, but we know little about them. The names of 20 to 30 writers on dreams and dream interpretation have been preserved in our *testimonia*, but only fragments of the texts survive, mostly brief notices and references made by Artemidoros of Daldis, the famous second-century AD Greek oneirocritic.[9] Although we know much about how ancient physicians, philosophers and religious writers viewed dreams, we have scant knowledge of Greco-Roman oneirology.[10] Even Artemidoros may not be an accurate guide; we do not whether his dreambook is typical of the literature on the subject or whether it represents a unique contribution.[11]

When we come to the dream-key manuals of the Byzantine period, our knowledge is no better than in the case of Antiquity. Nearly all the assigned authorships are spurious; their dates of composition can only be approximated, often within a range of 400 years; and the sources used by the authors are difficult, sometimes impossible, to recover. Many times the contents of one text are reproduced wholesale or with slight alterations in other texts; and since we cannot date any of these manuals precisely, we cannot always say who borrowed from whom. Here is what we can say with confidence about the Byzantine dream-key manuals. Seven separately identifiable dreambooks have survived, although surely more were written. I say 'separately identifiable',

---

[8] *Daniel* 357, ed. Drexl, 308; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 101.

[9] For remains of Greek and Roman dreambooks, see D. Del Corno, *Graecorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae* (Milan, 1969). The bibliography on Artemidoros is immense. Good starting points are: C. Walde, 'Dreams in an Auspicious Age. The Greek Interpreter of Dreams, Artemidorus', in D. Shulman and G. Stroumsa (eds), *Dreams and Dreaming in the History of Religion* (Oxford, 1969), 121–42, and *Antike Traumdeutung und moderne Traumforschung* (Düsseldorf, 2001); G. Weber, 'Traum und Alltag in hellenistischer Zeit', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 50 (1998), 22–39, and of the same author, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (Stuttgart, 2000); B. Näf, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum* (Darmstadt, 2004). For a comprehensive list of studies on dreams and dreaming in Antiquity, see the constantly updated website *Dreams of Antiquity. Bibliographische Online-Datenbank zu Träumen und Visionen in der Antike*, <http://www.gnomon.ku-eichstaett.de/dreams/index.html>.

[10] The latest comprehensive work on dreams in Greece and Rome is W. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), with extensive bibliography.

[11] Too much is often claimed of Artemidoros' dreambook. While the treatise can serve as a valuable source for the culture and society of Western Turkey during the Roman Imperial period, it may not necessarily be an accurate reflection of the rest of the contemporary Mediterranean world, let alone the cultural codes and practices of fifth- and fourth-century BC Athens. Artemidoros' observations can be applied securely only to the Eastern provinces of the second century AD.

since the same dreambook may be attributed to different persons in various codices. The dreambook of Nikephoros, to cite one case, was ascribed to many church theologians, even though its contents remained substantially the same.[12] Two of the dream-key manuals are in verse; four in prose; one in both verse and prose. The dreambooks date to the ninth through fifteenth centuries, with the exception of Daniel's, which may be as early as 350 or 400 AD.[13] As we shall see, the texts were meant for an educated reading audience – in two instances at least, for the emperor and his court.[14]

The earliest Byzantine *oneirokritikon* is attributed to Daniel the Prophet.[15] It dates to around the fourth century, or at least to a period when Christianity had not yet become dominant culturally. Animal sacrifices are interpreted favourably, idols and statues of gods are good dream symbols and sex (including incest and homosexuality) is freely discussed and not always viewed in negative terms – hardly what we would expect to see in a Christian text. The only reliable date we have, however, is the seventh century, when the Greek text was translated into Latin in southern France and renamed the *Somniale Danielis*.[16] We do not know of any other dream-key text from early Byzantium – at least none have survived. Certainly the climate at this time for producing *oneirokritika* was unfavourable: divination by dreams was officially proscribed by the church, on the grounds that it was a pagan practice, and by the state.[17] Moreover, given the official oppression of Iconoclasm in the capital, it would have been difficult to publish dream-key manuals, which emphasize imagery and the importance of symbolic representation.

It was after the demise of Iconoclasm and in the context of both the cultural and literary revival of the Macedonian 'Renaissance' and, as Maria Mavroudi

---

[12] For example, the dreambook is attributed in the *Codex Marcianus* 608 (fifteenth century) to an Athanasius, probably the fourth-century Alexandrian theologian who vigorously fought Arianism, and in the *Codex Ambrosianus* 592 (also fifteenth century) to a Gregoras, perhaps Nikephoros Gregoras who wrote a commentary on Synesius' book on dreams.

[13] See S.M. Oberhelman, 'Prolegomena to the Reconstruction of the Archetype of the Greek *Somniale Danielis*', *Quaderni di Studi Indo-Mediterranei* 2 (2009), 114.

[14] For details, see Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, ch. 1.

[15] Current bibliography in Oberhelman, 'Prolegomena', 107–24.

[16] For the latest discussion on the date, see L. DiTommaso, 'Greek, Latin, and Hebrew Manuscripts of the *Somniale Danielis* and *Lunationes Danielis* in the Vatican Library', *Manuscripta* 47/48 (2003–04), 6–7; Oberhelman, 'Prolegomena'.

[17] Early Byzantine emperors had banned dream interpreters, although their legislation merely replicated earlier Roman edicts; see G.T. Calofonos, 'Dream Interpretation: A Byzantine Superstition?' *BMGS* 9 (1984–1985), 217 (with bibliography); S.F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), 139 with n. 19. These laws were ignored, however. For attitudes in the church, see, for example, Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 52–5.

has shown, the Arab and Byzantine exchange and crossover of cultural ideas and thoughts transpiring along the borders between the Arabic and Byzantine empires that religious and political opposition to dreams disappeared. Not only were dreams now discussed in hagiography, Iconophile propaganda and historical texts, but, once again, dream-key manuals began to be published.[18] The earliest of these dreambooks, dated to the late ninth or the early tenth century, is the *Dreambook of Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople*. The patriarch referenced is, assuredly, Nikephoros I, a pro-icon figure who possessed impeccable orthodox credentials and therefore someone to whom authorship could safely be ascribed.[19] The author did not write in prose (the usual format of dream-key manuals), but cast his entries into metrical iambic trimeters. The author was well educated and intended his book for an audience of likewise erudite readers.[20]

Possibly contemporaneous is the dreambook of Achmet ibn Sereim.[21] As Maria Mavroudi convincingly demonstrated in her 2002 monograph, this lengthy work (240 pages in the Teubner edition) was based on several medieval Arabic dream texts and on the Arabic translation of Artemidoros. The author was a Christian, in some parts Christianizing his Arabic material for a Byzantine readership. Such an adaptation was easy to accomplish, since the Arabic source material was already monotheistic in content; even the Arabic translation of Artemidoros that Achmet used had previously been revised for an Islamic readership. The work may have been commissioned by Leo VI (866–912) for him and for members of his imperial court.[22]

---

[18] See, for example, A. Markopoulos, 'The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos', in L. Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium in the Ninth Century. Dead or Alive? Papers from the Thirtieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1996* (Aldershot, 1998), 37–49, repr. in his *History and Literature of Byzantium in the 9th–10th Centuries* (Aldershot, 2004), pt. XX. See also the chapters in this volume by C. Cupane, P. Magdalino and M. Mullett. Calofonos also posits a revival in dreaming in the tenth century due to the Macedonian emperors. For the exchange of ideas between Byzantines and Arabs, see M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation. The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, 2002), 392–429, especially 419–20.

[19] The definitive study of this dreambook is G. Guidorizzi, *Pseudo-Nicephoro, Libro dei sogni* (Naples, 1980). The monograph contains, besides text and commentary, excellent discussions of late Roman and Byzantine dream interpretation.

[20] See Guidorizzi's commentary *passim* (for example, 29).

[21] Mavroudi's *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation* is the indispensable study. See also the comments in J.C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, 2002).

[22] For the monotheistic aspects of the Arabic books as they relate to Achmet and Artemidoros, see E. Sirriyeh, 'Muslims Dreaming of Christians, Christians Dreaming of Muslims. Images from Medieval Dream Interpretation', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 17 (2006), 207–21. For Leo as possible target audience, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 61.

More dream-key manuals were written over the succeeding centuries. One, assigned spuriously to the second-century AD Persian prophet and priest Astrampsychos, is a revision of the Nikephoros dreambook, as some dreams are interpreted differently and the metrical verses of the Nikephoros have been recast as accentual dodecasyllables, perhaps with an eye to a more general audience. The dreambook dates somewhere to between ca 900 (the date of the Nikephoros dreambook) and 1300 (the date of the earliest manuscript of the Astrampsychos).

Another dreambook, composed mainly of material drawn from the dreambooks of Daniel, Nikephoros and Achmet, contains entries written in both prose and verse. It is attributed (spuriously) to 'Germanos, patriarch of Constantinople'; Germanos I, the famous pro-icon hero, is probably intended. The dreambook may be situated somewhere between Achmet in the early tenth century and the manuscript's date of ca 1300.

A sixth dream-key manual, found in the Codex *Parisinus Graecus* 2511 (dated to 1400), is comprised of 440 dreams and their interpretations. This is the only Byzantine dreambook lacking authorship, a surprising fact since false ascriptions to famous political and religious figures created an air of authority to a dream-key manual and overcame ecclesiastical suspicion about such writings.[23] The contents of the anonymous *oneirokritikon* are based on the dreambooks of Daniel, Achmet and Nikephoros (although the metrical verses of the Nikephoros have been rewritten as prose sentences). The author does display some originality, since 47 of the 400 entries have no parallel in Artemidoros or any extant Byzantine dreambook.

The latest of the Byzantine dreambooks is entitled 'The Dreambook of [or for] Manuel the Palaeologan'.[24] Although the author is not specifically identified as the Emperor Manuel II, the association is likely, since that emperor had a very strong interest in dreams and the lengthy letter on the subject that he sent to Andreas Asanes has survived.[25] As Mavroudi and Calofonos have demonstrated, the dreambook was written either by Manuel himself or by someone close to him and was intended for the imperial court and the aristocracy of Constantinople.[26]

The structure of Manuel's dreambook differs from those of the other Byzantine dream-key manuals (Achmet being the exception), in that the material is arranged in paragraph form. Each chapter has a summary header – for example,

---

[23] Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 242 n. 30.

[24] An excellent study of Manuel as a writer of dreams is G.T. Calofonos, 'Manuel II Palaeologos. Interpreter of Dreams?', *ByzF* 16 (1990), 447–55. It was Mavroudi who nicely observed that the title can be translated as 'A Dreambook for Manuel', not necessarily as 'A Dreambook by Manuel'; see also Mavroudi, 'Occult Science', 53 n. 17.

[25] Full discussion in Calofonos, 'Manuel'; text in J.F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (Paris, 1844; repr. Hildesheim, 1962), 239–46.

[26] See in particular Mavroudi, 'Occult Science', 53–5 with notes.

'Different Kinds of Pitas and Breads', 'Penis', 'Churches and Icons' – and then dreams exemplifying that symbol are given. This arrangement is a throwback to, or perhaps an imitation of, Artemidoros, Achmet and medieval Arabic writers. I would note, though, that the similarities between Manuel's text and those of his predecessors are few; most similarities can be explained by traditional oneirology. For example, Manuel's interpretation of the penis as strength and power, teeth as children and apples as erotic love for a woman are interpretations reaching back to Egyptian and Assyrian dreambooks.[27]

Manuel also follows Artemidoros and Achmet in discussing oneirocritic theory. Rather than simply saying 'x means y' or 'If x then y' and leaving things at that, Manuel allows us to recover the methods by which he deciphered many of his dreams. His favourite method of interpretation was etymology and sophisticated wordplay. For example:

> If mice appear in someone's house roaming up and down, all the secrets (*mystēria*) of the homeowner will be revealed. For the mouse (*mys*) derives its name from the [verb] *myō*, that is, to shut one's eyes (*kammyō*).[28]

> If someone dreams that he was riding a donkey, he is about to be promoted, resulting in his own gain (*ōpheleian*) and success (*prokopēn*). For the word 'donkey' (*onos*) is derived from the [verb] *onein*, which means 'to derive advantage' (*ōphelein*) and 'to succeed' (*prokoptein*). Besides, (a donkey is also called) *aeidaros* because it is always beaten by the one who drives him with a stick.[29]

Manuel's dreambook is unique in another way. Unlike his predecessors, the author attempts to place his dreambook in a real historical setting.[30] We see life at the imperial court and in the capital re-created before our eyes. Hagia Sophia comes alive, and we have visual pictures of the royal fleet, embassies and church rituals. The author describes how members of the Palaeologan family and the

---

[27] For these texts, see A.H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Third Series, Chester Beatty Gift* (London, 1935), vol. 1, 7–23; A. Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung* (Pap. Carlsberg XIII und XIV Verso) (Copenhagen, 1942); A.L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia, 1956). See now the useful discussion in J. Bilbija, 'Ancient Dream-Books as Mirrors of Worlds', in E. Cingano and L. Milano (eds), *Papers on Ancient Literatures. Greece, Rome and the Near East. Proceedings of the 'Advanced Seminar in the Humanities', Venice International University 2004–2005* (Venice, 2008), 75–104.

[28] Manuel, *Dreambook* 4, ed. A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia*, vol. 1 (Liège and Paris, 1927), 511; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 196.

[29] Manuel *Dreambook*, ed. Delatte, 514.18–22; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 201–2.

[30] See Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 15–16, citing the excellent studies of Mavroudi and Calofonos.

court suffered cruel fates, and how the city was hit with street riots and suffered the loss of Galata through treachery. So we read:

> If someone dreams that he was eating pieces of coarse bread (*kubarous*) or that someone gave him some pieces that he then shared with others, he will experience danger, inaction, humiliation, abuse from his enemies, and capture in battle. This is precisely how we can interpret events related in the war story concerning Sountzērakis, the son of Mesōthaniatē, and Leontopardos, the *protospatharios*: Tzêrakis was taken prisoner and put into chains by the enemy for a rather long period of time, while Leontopardos died after being struck in the mouth with a spear.[31]

> Sparrows signify confusion and distress regarding a vulgar and uncouth crowd, that is to say, the peasantry. If someone dreams that he was impeded by sparrows, he should know that he is about to experience a very great attack and a (potentially) fatal demise at the hands of commoners. And if in this dream he escaped from the birds, he will be delivered from these dangers; but if the birds overpowered him, he will be overpowered by commoners and have a full measure of evil. Such (is the dream that) the great interpreter of the Syrians had: he barely escaped the grave danger hanging over him, for about 12,000 people had surrounded him when it was rumoured that the hill next to Galata was being sold to the Franks by the empress through his agency.[32]

> If someone dreams of seeing a person riding a beautiful and healthy horse of short stature (*suntomon*), he is about to hear a good but concise (*suntomon*) report about his public standing, influence and powerful actions. But if the horse was sluggish and maimed and therefore had difficulty moving, he will hear words that are odious and fraught with great danger – words that he will definitely accept. And if the dreamer is enjoying good fortune (*eutuchēs*) and is held in high esteem (*endoxos*), he will soon become unfortunate (*dustuchēsei*) and lose his honour (*doxan*). This was the dream that the Grand Duke (*megas doux*) had after his brother-in-law the Palaeologan was drowned: he had acquired such a horse even though he had saturated it with blows and lashes.[33]

---

[31] Manuel, *Dreambook* 9, ed. Delatte, 513; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 198.

[32] Manuel, *Dreambook*, ed. Delatte, 513.30–514.8; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 200.

[33] Manuel, *Dreambook*, ed. Delatte, 514.10–18; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 201. Mavroudi, 'Occult Science', 53 n. 17, relates this dream directly to the life of Alexius Apocaucus, who was Grand Duke and died in 1345. She notes that the circumstances of his brother-in-law's death are given by the contemporary history of John Kantakouzenos, 3.71, ed. L. Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris libri IV*, vol. 2 (Bonn, 1831), 435.10–14.

It is clear that the author of this dreambook assumed that his readers would recognize the historical events and the people described in the text.

The compositional structure of the Byzantine dream-key manuals deserves comment. Achmet's and Manuel's dreambook each imitate the organizational structure of Artemidoros and Arabic dream texts. The other dreambooks, however, were composed in an organic manner. Basically we have a single primary text (the Daniel dreambook is the most likely the Ur-text), which was then constantly modified, enlarged and amplified over the centuries by scribes. The original text operated like a template, which was revised, rewritten and then republished, expanding the original text into a significantly longer and more complex one. These later versions could be assigned to new authors and then published as a 'new' dream-key manual. The original core would remain intact, provided that the dream and/or its interpretation had not become irrelevant (for example, obsolete political offices are mentioned in the original text) or had not become contrary to existing social and cultural codes (for example, the status of eunuchs varied throughout Byzantium, and so a dream of being one could have negative or positive implications). In cases of irrelevance or contradiction, the entry was deleted or was revised.

A similar method of composition characterizes the Byzantine *iatrosophion*. An *iatrosophion* is either a personal notebook on therapeutics written by a single physician, or a collection of remedies, recipes and cures set down by a collaborative community of physicians in a hospital setting.[34] The first *iatrosophia*, written by the early Byzantine writers Oribasios, Aetios and Alexander of Tralles, contained prescriptions and remedies drawn from classical authors like Hippocrates, Dioscorides and Galen. These writers were not slavish copyists, however, for they revised, clarified, expanded and corrected their sources in the face of new medical substances and new medical knowledge. Mid- and late Byzantine writers like Paul of Aegina and Simeon Seth of Antioch continued this method: while they copied the texts of Oribasius and Alexander, they revised those texts to incorporate evolving *materia medica*, new diseases, changes in pharmacology and to record actual clinical observations. The tradition of the Byzantine *iatrosophia*, therefore, was constant reproduction, with recipes and treatments deleted, revised and added by subsequent writers. This method of composition is exactly what we see in the Byzantine dream-key manual.

Let us take the dreambook of Daniel. Although this work is at best late fourth century in origin, our earliest extant Greek text dates to the sixteenth century.

[34] For a general introduction to these books, see A. Touwaide, 'Byzantine Hospitals Manuals (Iatrosophia) as a Source for the Study of Therapeutics', in B. Bowers (ed.), *The Medieval Hospital and Medical Practice* (Aldershot, 2007), 147–73, with extensive bibliography; C. Papadopoulos, 'Post-Byzantine Medical Manuscripts. New Insights into the Greek Medical Tradition, Its Intellectual and Practical Interconnections, and Our Understanding of Greek Culture', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 27 (2009), 107–30.

This version contains 486 entries, but it is clear that the original text has been supplemented by material drawn from other sources: sometimes the same dream symbol is interpreted differently, even in contradictory terms. For example, we have the entry, 'Seeing wild animals and associating with them signifies a disturbance caused by enemies', but shortly afterwards a contradictory entry, 'Seeing wild animals and going around with them will cause friendship with enemies'.[35] The same entry may be repeated; we have, for example, no less than three dreams of walking barefoot, two dreams of vomiting and two dreams of climbing heights — often written with the same vocabulary and in the same word order. Other entries are expanded to include a second dream symbol, something that a scribe could easily do. Since most entries have the structure of 'x means y', one can simply add another 'x' to the equation. Thus, 'and combing it' can be inserted into 'A dream of washing one's hair is a sign of spiritual purity', thus producing a new dream entry: 'A dream of washing one's hair and combing it is a sign of spiritual purity'.

If, therefore, the original text of the Daniel dreambook is not the same as the existing sixteenth-century Greek manuscript, how can we reconstruct it? The Latin translation of the Greek text has survived in over 150 Latin and vernacular versions from the ninth through sixteenth centuries.[36] The problem, however, is that each version is different from the other, as copyists added, deleted and revised the dream entries; no one text is the exemplar of the other.[37] Only by comparing the sixteenth-century Greek version of the Daniel with the best and earliest versions of the Latin *Somniale* can we possibly reconstruct the Greek archetype. The best textual traditions are represented by the following manuscripts: British Library, MS *Cotton Tiberius* A.iii (mid-eleventh century, with 302 entries) and British Library, MS *Cotton Titus* D (eleventh century, with 154 entries); Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 271 (tenth century, with 158 entries); and Uppsala, *Universitätbibliothek*, MS C 664 (ninth century, with 312 entries). All other Latin and vernacular versions may be traced back to these traditions. But the problem is that each of these versions contains material unique to it and, even where the three manuscripts agree, there are differences in symbol, content and interpretation. No one text, therefore, preserves the archetype intact, although the kernel of that original lies to varying degrees in each manuscript, buried under strata of extraneous material.

---

[35] *Daniel* 218 and 225, ed. Drexl, 302; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 85, 86.

[36] Latest treatment is L. Di Tomasso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature* (Leiden and Boston, 2005); catalogue of manuscripts on 378–97, with textual studies given on 397–401 and secondary scholarship (very selective, however) on 401–2.

[37] A. Epe, *Wissensliteratur im angelsächsischen England. Das Fachschrifttum der vergessenen artes mechanicae und artes magicae. Mit besondere Berücksichtigung des Somniale Danielis. Edition der (lateinisch-) altenglischen Fassungen* (Münster, 2005), xxvii–xxviii.

If we compare the dream entries in our best Latin traditions with those in the Greek manuscript, we find 127 entries in the Greek version similar to at least two of the three traditions. A reasonable conclusion is that a quarter of the fifteenth-century Greek codex may go back to the original core of the fourth- or fifth-century Daniel archetype, while the remainder of the text may be attributed to material taken from other sources.[38] This same method of composition applies to the dreambook of Nikephoros as well. Giulio Guidorizzi in his 1980 monograph argued that the original text of the dreambook was comprised of about 130 verses, but that subsequent scribes, gleaning material from the dreambooks of Artemidoros, Daniel and Achmet, added more than 200 verses to this original core.

Who were the readers of the Byzantine dream-key manuals? What was the audience? It is clear, first, that the readers were primarily from the aristocratic class of the capital. If we examine the four[39] main dreambooks of the Byzantine period – those ascribed to Daniel, Nikephoros, Achmet and Manuel – Achmet's and Manuel's dreambooks may be securely placed at the imperial court. As we have seen, the Achmet book was likely commissioned by a Byzantine emperor, possibly Leo VI who was interested in the occult sciences. The Manuel book, while it may not have been written *by* the Emperor Manuel II, was, at the very least, composed *for* him. The audience of both these dreambooks, therefore, was the aristocracy and members of the imperial court. Regarding the metrical Nikephoros dreambook, with its vocabulary pulled from Homer and other classical texts, it too was intended for a learned and educated readership, and so again the aristocratic class is likely. As for the Daniel dreambook, firm conclusions about its intended audience are not possible. But since most of the interpretations are based on sophisticated wordplay (often using classical vocabulary), analogy and metaphor, etymology and literary allusions, these would have been puzzling to those not in the 'loop', and were probably written for the appreciation of a more learned readership. It would appear, then, that divination through dream-key manuals was part of the complex belief system of the Byzantine upper class, at least in Constantinople.[40]

The audience not only was aristocratic, it was also male. The dreams, and the ways in which they were interpreted, reinforced and buttressed contemporary

[38] A reconstruction of the many sources of the sixteenth-century Greek version, for example, Artemidoros, Achmet, Nikephoros, and the original archetype is in Oberhelman, 'Prolegomena'.

[39] I say 'four', since the other three *oneirokritika* (Astrampsychos, Germanos and the *Anonymous Dreambook*) are, in essence, reworked versions, or compilations, of the other four.

[40] For divination and magical practices, see Mavroudi's excellent article, 'Occult Science'; also the exhaustive survey in Greenfield, 'Contribution', and the articles in J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic. Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (London and New York, 2008).

gender codes and ideologies of sex and power. The Byzantine oneirocritics, like Artemidoros before them, stress male dominance and the subordination of women, children and slaves.[41] The male genitalia, frequently discussed in the *oneirokritika*, symbolize strength and power and define the value of a man; women's private parts, on the other hand, are mentioned only once as an omen of death. Men are signified by penises, but so too are women. The penis, in other words, not only is the locus of biological sex but it socially constructs gender. And because the penis penetrates and because penetration defines the act of power in the private and in the public realm, it determines who exerts power and who does not.

The actual sex act is rarely described, however, Achmet and Daniel serving as the two exceptions.[42] Nikephoros has only one or two references to sex, and that depends on how far one wants to stretch the meaning of the verb *plektein*. Manuel interprets many dreams as signifying love affairs and erotic passion, but none of his dreams actually portray sexual activity. Daniel's text, by contrast, has 17 dreams involving specific forms of sexual activity, all (except one) performed by men upon social inferiors like wives, other men's wives, sisters, concubines, old women, prostitutes and slave girls.[43] This casual discussion of sex recalls the frankness on the topic in the much earlier Egyptian and Mesopotamian dream-key texts, in Artemidoros and in medieval Arabic treatises.[44] There is no direct relationship between Daniel and these authors, however. For example, only three specific agreements on sex exist between Artemidoros and Daniel.[45]

---

[41] For sex and gender in ancient, Byzantine and Arabic dreambooks, see S.M. Oberhelman, 'Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power in Ancient and Medieval Greece and Medieval Islam', in J.W. Wright and E. Rowson (eds), *Homoeroticism in Medieval Islam* (New York, 1997), 55–93; J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* (New York and London, 1990), chapter 1; M. Mavroudi, 'Ta'bīr al-Ru'yā and Aḥkām al-Nujūm References to Women in Dream Interpretation and Astrology Transferred from Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Medieval Islam to Byzantium. Some Problems and Considerations', in B. Gruendler and M. Cooperson (eds), *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms. Festschrift für Wolfhart Heinrichs on His 65th Birthday from His Students and Colleagues* (Leiden, 2007), 47–67.

[42] Achmet perhaps took advantage of his purported status as an Arabic *oneirokritês* to transmit his many passages on sex, while *Daniel*'s text was, as stated above, pagan, at least to start with.

[43] *Daniel* 96, 104, 107, 343–4, 346–53, 355, 357, 364, 371–2, ed. Drexl, 296, 297, 307–8, 309; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 72, 73, 74, 99, 100–101, 102, 103.

[44] See Mavroudi, 'References to Women'.

[45] *Daniel* 348, ed. Drexl, 308; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 100 = Artemidoros 1.78 (sex with one's wife is good, though Artemidoros regards it as such only if the woman is submissive and does what pleases her husband); *Daniel* 346, ed. Drexl, 308; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 100 = Artemidoros 1.80 (sex with a dead person is good); *Daniel* 351, ed. Drexl, 308; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 101 = Artemidoros 1.78 (sex with a concubine is good).

Also, Daniel contains no references to bestiality (discussed in detail by Achmet and Artemidoros), while he disapproves of homoerotic sex.[46] Was the aversion to bestiality and homoeroticism due to the prejudice of the writer of the later Greek version? Or was it an attitude on the part of the writer of the original Daniel text? We cannot say. Moreover, do these dreams relating to sex even belong to the original text, or were they added later? Again, we cannot say. Two points may be made, however. First, many of them appear consecutively rather than being spread throughout the text,[47] and so at some point they must have been grouped together thematically. Second, few of these entries appear in the Latin versions of the Daniel dreambook. This means that if the 17 entries in the Greek text are from the original Daniel dreambook, then the writers in the West deleted them – perhaps on the grounds that the entries were offensive or too provocative.[48] But if the entries were absent in the Greek text when it was first translated into Latin in the seventh century, then someone thought that the later Greek version needed a comprehensive discussion of sex and so inserted exemplary dreams from an unknown source.

So, the audience was aristocratic and male. What else? On the basis of the interpretations, the readers lived in a highly competitive and dangerous society. If we examine again the Daniel dreambook, we see a pervasive fear of plots and treachery (imagined or real) caused by envy and hatred. Twenty dreams focus on dangers posed by personal enemies, and 15 more deal with alliances and friendships broken or formed. Interestingly, there is no concern for external threats like invasion or foreign wars; rather, one's real enemy lives next door, he is a business partner, she sleeps in his bed. We also see an extensive anxiety about making profit or suffering loss: 30 dreams foretell that the dreamer will lose property or money; while, in what is surely wish-fulfillment or a selling point for the book, 60 dreams predict that the dreamer will acquire profit. Eleven dreams deal specifically with business ventures and 12 more with hindrance and impediments in one's life. Nineteen other dreams focus on gaining honour and a rank of office or on the opposite fate, namely losing one's status, being imprisoned or being executed by the authorities. And in a world where illness and pestilence were all too often fatal and people were obsessed with staying

[46] Achmet and Artemidoros have favourable views on homoeroticism, unless the dreamer is the one who is penetrated; the latter dream is interpreted unfavourably, since it shows him no longer doing what real men do, which is to penetrate. See Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 22–3 n. 10, 99–100 n. 361, 100 n. 364, 101–2 n. 475, 117–18 n. 4, 183–4 n. 93.

[47] *Daniel* 349–53, 355, 357, 364, 371–2, ed. Drexl, 308, 309; Oberhelman, *Dreambooks*, 101, 103.

[48] The Latin *Somniale Danielis* versions are decidedly more religious in outlook and content than what we see in the Greek dream-key manuals. The Uppsala MS, for example, has numerous dreams involving churches and makes many references to saints and monks.

healthy, 21 dreams predict impending disease or an outbreak of plague. The clear impression one gets from reading the dreams in the Daniel text is that its male aristocratic readers viewed themselves as living in a dangerous and unstable world, where disgrace or promotion, wealth or poverty, well-being or illness, love or betrayal were all just around the corner.[49]

There is also a sense, a feeling, of fatalism in the dream-key manuals. Nowhere is it stated that the fate predicted by the dream can be avoided, that God can or will turn aside the evil, that the dreamer can take preventative countermeasures. Rather, the future has been revealed and, apparently, it cannot be changed. All one can do is to take prudent steps to minimize the harm or to optimize the goodness – otherwise, one must simply resign himself to his fate. The dream-key manuals recommend no prayers to God, Mary the Mother of God or saints; no spells to be recited; no charms or amulets to be fashioned; no prophylactic measures to be undertaken.[50]

Let me conclude with what is, essentially, a negative observation. As stated earlier, only a small handful of dream-key manuals survive from the entire span of the Byzantine Empire. That number is small when set beside the prolific output of the Arabs.[51] Why so few in Byzantium? I would argue that dream interpretation was done primarily at the personal or household level. Nearly everyone believed in the power and importance of dreams, but not everyone – indeed, few – really needed to consult a dream-key manual for interpreting their dreams. If the research of field anthropologists like Charles Stewart and Richard and Eva Blum on practices in modern Greek villages and islands is applicable to Byzantium,[52] the dreams of most Byzantines were straightforward and clear enough, and centered primarily on health and disease, on advice for courses of action and on coping with stress and anxiety. Interpretation, if required, would not have been difficult. One did not have to be a professional oneirocritic to decipher a dream of fat cattle as signifying future gain. He only had to recall Genesis 41, with its account of Pharaoh's dream of fat cows; or he could look outside his

---

[49] Cf. Bilbija, 'Ancient Dream-Books', 87–91, for similar concerns in Near Eastern and Egyptian dream-key manuals.

[50] See the contribution of S. Constantinou in this volume.

[51] Mavroudi points out (personal communication) that the lengthy lists in studies like Lamoreaux, *Early Muslim Tradition*, and T. Fahd, *La divination arabe. Études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam* (Leiden, 1996) – where over 240 MSS are mentioned – are misleading; if duplicate copies of authors like Artemidoros are removed, the actual number is considerably fewer.

[52] R. and E. Blum, *Health and Healing in Rural Greece* (Stanford, 1965) and *The Dangerous Hour. The Lore and Culture of Mystery and Crisis in Rural Greece* (London, 1970). Among the many studies of C. Stewart, let me note 'Fields in Dreams. Anxiety, Experience and the Limitations of Social Constructionism in Greek Dream Narratives', *American Ethnologist* 24 (1997), 877–94.

window and, while watching his fat cows graze and imagining the profit they would bring at market, form his own analogic interpretation. One did have to be trained in the fine points of oneirology to deduce that a dream of being thrown into prison or placed in chains symbolizes a life of sorrow; that is a simple enough analogy to construct. I would argue that *printed* dream-key texts are not in high demand in an environment where dreams are openly shared and discussed and where they form an integral part of everyday life. The wise woman of the family, or the wise men and women of the village who were also skilled in medical folk healing, or a friend, could decode a dream far better than could a dream-key manual written for the imperial court.[53] A grandmother interpreting a dream for her emotionally distraught granddaughter would have provided far more solace and much better advice than what would appear in, say, a household copy of Daniel's dreambook – which, with its universal applicability, is coldly impersonal and lacks any idiosyncratic importance to a dreamer. And in a culture where sleeping at a church or shrine could restore a person to health; where a night-time visit from an angel or Mary Theotokos or saint could bring joy and comfort; where the spiritually pure could receive a glimpse of heaven in a dream-vision – what great benefits could one derive from written dream-key manuals? Moreover, these manuals could not help the sick, for they offered no medical regimen, no pharmacology, no cure.[54] It is easy enough to imagine a dream-key manual consulted by members of an imperial court seeking omens as the world was crashing around them, or by an aristocrat anxious over the future of his business ventures. But the vast majority of people dreamt dreams and saw visions that were clear enough to understand. And if the dream needed interpretation, they themselves could do this upon rising, or at the breakfast or lunch table with family members or later while talking with friends or the village 'expert' on dreams. There was no need, therefore, to visit a scriptorium to commission a copy of Nikephoros' *oneirokritikon*, not when one's house, one's neighbourhood, one's village was a living dream-key manual.

---

[53] For dreams as a lived reality, see in this volume C. Angelidi.

[54] See S.M. Oberhelman, '*Iatrosophia* and an Eighteenth-Century *Oneirokritês* in the National Library of Greece', *Medicina nei Secoli Medicina nei Secoli. Arte e Scienza* 21/2 (2010), 477–501, for an Ottoman Greek dreambook recommending medical and folk remedies.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 10

Byzantine and Islamic Dream Interpretation: A Comparative Approach to the Problem of 'Reality' vs 'Literary Tradition'*

Maria Mavroudi

The study of civilizations with a 'classical' tradition is likely to reveal certain analogies between them, in both the way these civilizations approached their own past and how modern scholarship dealt with them and their use of their older heritage. Among such civilizations, the combined study of medieval Islam and Byzantium can be particularly illuminating, since they both are heirs to and interpreters of the 'classical' tradition, meaning the tradition of Graeco-Roman Antiquity.[1] As a result, scholars working in both the Greek and the Arabic Middle Ages have had to reflect on whether, when and how the existence of a 'canon' of authors helped maintain intellectual continuity and a higher standard of civilization, or became a hurdle inhibiting this civilization's forward mobility. For example, what does it mean for our understanding of Byzantine and Islamic medicine that Galen's texts of the second century AD remained central to the teaching of both throughout the medieval and into the early modern period?[2] Should we infer that neither of these two medieval medicines was interested in 'innovation' and 'progress' and that they mostly

---

* Part of this article incorporates materials also presented in M. Mavroudi, '*Ta'bīr al-ruy'ā* and *aḥkām al-nujūm:* References to Women in Dream Interpretation and Astrology Transferred from Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Medieval Islam to Byzantium. Some Problems and Considerations', in B. Gruendler and M. Cooperson (eds), *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms. Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on His 65th Birthday Presented by His Students and Colleagues* (Leiden, 2008), 47–67.

[1] For a brief discussion on the implications of accepting that both medieval Christendom and medieval Islam are heirs to Graeco-Roman Antiquity and what this has meant in modern historiography, see M. Mavroudi, 'Review of G. Fowden, *Quṣayr 'Amra. Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2004)', *JRA* 19 (2006), 731–9.

[2] On Galen's career, see V. Nutton, 'Galen of Pergamum', in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds), *Brill's New Pauly. Antiquity Volumes* (Leiden, 2009); on the afterlife of his writings and thought in the Middle Ages (mostly Latin and Arabic, with minimal reference to Byzantium),

remained stagnant due to what appears as Galen's tyranny over subsequent medical thought? Dream interpretation which, both in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, both Byzantine and Islamic, was germane to the practice of medicine,[3] is characterized by an equivalent tyranny by a single author, at least in the written manifestations of its practice. This authority is, of course, Artemidoros of Ephesus, who wrote and was active as dream interpreter at around the same time and in the larger geographic and political universe that Galen did.[4] Artemidoros' currency in Byzantium can hardly be doubted, given the manuscript tradition of his text and its frequent quotation by Byzantine authors.[5] As for his passage into the Islamic world, it was mediated by another iconic figure, the ninth-century doctor and translator of Greek material, particularly medical, from Greek and Syriac into Arabic: Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, a native speaker of Syriac and a Nestorian Christian by faith.[6] Ḥunayn is also the most authoritative, prolific and successful translator of Galen's immense corpus into Arabic. The analogies in the medieval fate of Galen and Artemidoros in Byzantium and the Muslim world cannot be adequately explained by according

see V. Nutton, 'Galenism (CT)', and V. Nutton, 'Arabic medicine (CT)', in Cancik and Schneider (eds), *Brill's New Pauly. Antiquity volumes*.

[3] On the connection between dream interpretation and medicine in Antiquity, see C. Walde, 'Dreaming in a Prosperous Age? Artemidorus, the Greek Interpreter of Dreams', in D. Shulman and G. Stroumsa (eds), *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (Oxford and New York, 1999), 121–3.

[4] For the date of Artemidoros, see the references collected in *Artemidoros Onirocriticon libri V*, ed. R. Pack (Leipzig, 1963), xxiv. For a recent summary of the discussions aiming to date and place Artemidoros, see M. Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, trans. M. Mavroudi (Athens, 2002), 9–10. We are much better informed on the career of Galen than Artemidoros, but the two share birth in a Greek-speaking urban centre of Roman Asia Minor, an itinerant life, and professional success during their lifetime aided, perhaps, by their respective visits to Rome, the imperial centre; see M. Trapp, 'Artemidorus of Daldis' (no. 6), in Cancik and Schneider (eds), *Brill's New Pauly*. *Antiquity Volumes*.

[5] See M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, 2002), 423 n. 112; Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, 32–6.

[6] On Ḥunayn, see G. Strohmaier, 'Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq al-'Ibādī', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1986), 578–81. For a discussion on the absorption of Artemidoros into Arabic medical lore and a presentation of earlier literature on the Arabic translation of this text, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 135–42; Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, 19–32; briefly, M. Mavroudi, 'Artemidorus of Ephesus', in G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas and E. Rowson (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, Brill Online. For a detailed discussion on how individual Arabic manuals on dream interpretation appropriated Artemidoros through Ḥunayn's translation up to the eleventh century, see J. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, 2002), 45–77.

a central role to the so-called classical tradition and attributing its international and lasting currency in the medieval period to its self-evident superiority vis-à-vis anything produced by the Middle Ages, whether Greek or Arabic. So, instead of asking what there was in the classical tradition that ensured its enduring allure in the Greek and Arabic Middle Ages, it may be more productive to ask what qualities both the Greek and the Arabic Middle Ages shared, that allowed both of them to appropriate the classical tradition in enduring ways. The question is huge, and of immense consequence regarding the perceived conundrum between tradition and innovation in the transmission of learning and the creation of new knowledge, as well as to any reflection on the continuity versus discontinuity of Greek culture from Antiquity to the present. However, it is feasible to offer smaller-scale considerations that fit into this larger topic by concentrating on certain aspects of the Byzantine theory and practice of dream interpretation and try to understand how they can simultaneously reflect both received tradition and new concerns and approaches. Regarding the Byzantine practice of dream interpretation, it seems particularly fruitful to concentrate on issues of sexuality and gender because of the contrast between our modern views on how dream interpretation can illuminate aspects of our experience of sexuality and gender and the experience of the same things as reflected in Artemidoros and his heirs of the Byzantine and Islamic period.[7]

Contrary to modern psychoanalysis, and consistently with what has already been pointed out for Artemidoros by John Winkler, Byzantine and Islamic dream literature does not view the experience of gender and sexuality as any more central than other aspects of human life and activity, nor as particularly burdened by psychological tension and confusion.[8] In addition, dreams are not considered as the key to accessing and understanding a latent and repressed part of a dreamer's personality. Dreams about sex are a rather small percentage of those discussed and interpreted in the ancient and medieval manuals, whether Greek or Arabic. Non-sexual dreams signifying sex are also limited in number. Yet it would be, indeed, absurd to claim that the contemporaries of Artemidoros or the subjects of the Byzantine emperors and the Muslim caliphs were little interested in sex and that gender did not play an important role in human experience, both personal and social.[9]

---

[7] For a comparison between Artemidoros and Freudian psychoanalysis, see Walde, 'Dreaming in a Prosperous Age?', 128–38, and M. Chryssanthopoulos, *Αρτεμίδωρος και Φρόυντ. Ερμηνευτικές θεωρίες και λογοτεχνικά όνειρα*, (Athens, 2005); for a brief discussion of Artemidoros' approach to sexual dreams as opposed to that of Freudian psychoanalysis, see Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, 16–17.

[8] J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990), 23–44.

[9] Women, sexuality and gender have been much more explored in the context of the Arabic than the Greek Middle Ages; the reason is, of course, that investigations and

The similarity in the attitudes towards sex and gender shared by Artemidoros, Byzantine and Islamic dream interpretation can partly be explained by the demonstrable direct textual links that tie them together: Artemidoros was translated into Arabic in the ninth century and subsequently informed the entire tradition of Islamic dream interpretation.[10] His afterlife was ensured by the abundant quotations of Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq's translation in the eleventh-century dreambook of al-Dīnawarī, one of the most extensive and exhaustive works on dream interpretation ever written in Arabic, which became an important source for later authors.[11] At the same time, our most extensive witness – by far – about Byzantine dream interpretation is the so-called *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*, which is demonstrably a Greek translation and Christian adaptation of Islamic Arabic material composed in the tenth century. The theoretical principles of dream interpretation that it expounds as well as a significant number of its interpretations are in close agreement with what can be found in Artemidoros. Yet the echoes of Artemidoros in the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* are not the result of its author's direct consultation of the ancient Greek text; rather, they reflect the important role that Artemidoros played in the composition of Muslim Arabic treatises on the topic. This means that the best chance at understanding Byzantine dream interpretation is inevitably filtered through the lens of its contemporary Islamic dream interpretation, itself inextricably linked with Graeco-Roman lore that also had currency in Byzantium during the same period.[12]

---

interpretations of this topic within medieval Islam reflect a modern political problem, namely the present concern with ideas and practices in the modern Middle East both within and outside the Muslim world. An extensive and recent reference work on the topic is the six-volume *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (Leiden, 2003–07) geared more to the present but including references to the medieval period; see also L. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, 1992). For a succinct discussion of Western scholarship on Arabic homoerotica, see J.W. Wright, 'Masculine Allusion and the Structure of Satire in Early "Abbāsid Poetry"', in J.W. Wright and E. Rowson (eds), *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York, 1997), 1–23. For a recent publication on the contemporary political issues implied in any discussion of Middle Eastern homoeroticism in the present or in the past, see J. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago, 2007).

[10] For an extensive discussion, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 135–42.

[11] Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, 19–32, and Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 139–40; more broadly on the reception of ancient Greek dream interpretation in the Muslim tradition, Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition*, 45–97.

[12] The exact textual relations between Artemidoros, the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*, and the Arabic tradition, are traced in Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*.

It is unclear whether the so-called *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* was indeed the longest and most comprehensive text on dream interpretation composed in Greek during the Byzantine period. The *Souda* mentions a number of authors on the genre that were in circulation by the tenth century, of which no other trace exists nowadays and who cannot be dated with certainty for this reason;[13] for the period after the tenth century, we do not even have titles, because no resource comparable to the *Souda* in supplying bibliographical information about ancient and medieval authors exists. It is plausible that the *Oneirokritikon*'s scope and length may have been rivalled at least by one composition of the Palaiologan period linked, in the manuscript tradition, with the name of Emperor Manuel Palaiologos (r. 1391–1425). The authorship of this text presents problems summarized and discussed in the past by George Calofonos that are centered on whether or not the text was written by Manuel.[14] Byzantinists have generally dismissed the possibility that this emperor was indeed the author, because – based on his prolific literary output – he is known to have taken literary compositions seriously, while this text deals with a 'superstitious' rather than 'worthwhile' subject and, at least in the form that we have it, adopts a lower linguistic register rather than the classicizing one preferred by the emperor in his other compositions. The title itself as it is recorded in the manuscript tradition is not particularly helpful, as it may mean 'Dreambook according to Manuel Palaiologos' or 'Dreambook [composed] by' or 'for Manuel Palaiologos'.[15] Whoever the author, there can be no doubt that this text, even if not written by Manuel, was produced and circulated in Byzantine courtly circles, because its geographic focus is clearly Constantinople[16] and it refers to individuals

[13] The evidence of the *Souda* has been collected in D. Del Corno, *Graecorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae* (Milan, 1969).

[14] G.T. Calofonos, 'Manuel II Palaiologos: Interpreter of Dreams?', *ByzF* 16 (1990), 447–55.

[15] MS *Leidensis Voss.* 49 appends excerpts from Manuel's dreambook to the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* without giving them a title. A title is recorded only in MS *Paris. gr.* 2419 and is hard to read; indeed, the scribe of the *Parisinus* is George Medeiates (Γεώργιος Μηδειάτης), whose handwriting can be unclear and at times undecipherable and whose spelling and grammar often diverge from the rules (therefore preclude intelligent guesses on the part of scholars); on Medeiates, see H. Hunger et al., *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1989), no. 87. A. Delatte, who edited the text based exclusively on MS *Paris. gr.* 2419, read its title as ἕτερος ὀνειροκρίτης κατὰ Μανουὴλ τοῦ Παλαιολόγου, ed. A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia*, vol. 1 (Liège and Paris, 1927), 511.1–2; the detailed description of the same MS provided by F. Cumont, *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*, vol. 8.1 (Paris, 1911), 63, gives the title as ἕτερος ὀνειροκρίτης Μανουὴλ τοῦ Παλαιολόγου.

[16] For example, chapter 8 (visiting the imperial palace), chapter 10 (Galata and the hill behind it), chapter 27 (visiting the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and receiving orders or honours from an imperial or aristocratic person), ed. Delatte, 512.27–8, 514.6–8, 518.15ff., and 519.6–15.

that can be identified as belonging to the imperial environment, such as the *megas diermeneutēs Syrianōn* and an *aktouarios*, a title which, by the Palaiologan period, was awarded to court physicians. In addition, Phakrasis (Φακρασίς, sic in ed. Delatte, 511.10) is a well-known family name, though the incident alluded to in the text cannot be identified; at least one figure by that name living in the late fourteenth century was a personal acquaintance of Manuel Palaiologos: Demetrios Phakrases, *megas primmikerios*, whom Manuel appointed governor of Thessalonike in his stead when he sailed away from the city in 1371.[17] Further, Manuel's dreambook tells us that Alexios Apokaukos (referred to in the text as *megas doux*) was warned about the imminent but unexpected death of his son-in-law by a dream.[18] The circumstances of this death (without the dream) are described by John Kantakouzenos (d. 1354) in his *Histories* and can be dated to the year 1343, seven years earlier than Manuel's birth in 1350.[19] A number of individuals by the name 'Manuel Palaiologos' are recorded in the extant sources,[20] but only two among them, besides Emperor Manuel, are chronologically plausible authors.[21]

Manuel's candidacy for the authorship of the dreambook becomes more likely once we take into consideration his interest in dreams evident in an epistle addressed to Andreas Asan; there, Manuel discussed under what conditions divination through dreams can be truthful.[22] Though the two texts deal with dream interpretation from an entirely different perspective, they converge in at least one point, which suggests that the dreambook may be legitimately associated with the person of Manuel: in 13 pages of printed text, it includes seven examples of dreams dreamt and proven truthful. The dreams are mostly referred to briefly, which suggests that the text as we have it is an abbreviated version of a longer work.

The density of examples in Manuel's dreambook is unusual: though Artemidoros abundantly narrates real-life examples of dreams dreamt and correctly interpreted, the only other Byzantine dreambook that includes any is the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* that cites 19 such instances in 241 pages of printed text. The insistence of Manuel's dreambook on real examples of predictive dreams is consonant with a remark found in his epistle on the provenance and veracity of dreams addressed to Andreas Asan (ed. Boissonade, pp. 245–6): according to Manuel in the epistle,

---

[17] *PLP* no. 29576; another possibility may be Matthaios Phakrases, *PLP* no. 29584.

[18] Chapter 11, ed. Delatte, 514.10–18.

[19] John Kantakouzenos, *Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri IV*, vol. 2 (Bonn, 1831), 435.

[20] See *PLP* nos 21503–16.

[21] *PLP* no. 21506 (appears as an accuser in a legal case brought before the patriarchal court in 1402) and 21514 (owner of a MS of the *Tetrabiblos*).

[22] Manuel, Περὶ ὀνειράτων, ed. J.-F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (Paris, 1844; repr. Hildesheim, 1962), 239–46.

dreams and other omens sent from God (*para Theou*) and the devil (*to phthoneron te kai ponērotaton pneuma*) have proven truthful, and examples of such instances are so abundant and well known that it would be superfluous to enumerate them.[23]

Further evidence suggests that the dreambook associated with Manuel may have been longer and more highbrow than the versions in which we currently have it: the two manuscripts from which we know it (both copied in the fifteenth century), MSS *Paris. gr.* 2419 and *Leidensis Voss. gr.* 49, exhibit a different sequence of chapters each. Both seem to preserve fragments excerpted from a longer and better organized text because they cover in detail an eclectic assortment of dream symbols while omitting others that one would normally have expected to see included; in addition, though the version of the text in the *Leidensis* is shorter, it comprises two phrases that do not appear in the *Parisinus* but seem to go back to a longer common ancestor of both versions.[24] The *Leidensis* (though not the *Parisinus*) interprets dreaming of having sexual intercourse with nuns as sorrow, a dream symbol that does not appear anywhere else in Greek texts on dream interpretation.[25] The negative outcome of this dream is consistent with a general principle of ancient and medieval (both Byzantine and Islamic) dream interpretation, whereby what is according to law and custom is auspicious, while the opposite is inauspicious (Artemidoros 1.3 and 1.8). In addition, the *Leidensis* justifies the interpretation of wells, cisterns and vessels holding water as women (found already in Artemidoros 2.27, ed. Pack, 143 and so on), with a verse from the Old Testament, *Proverbs* 5.15.1. The method of interpreting

---

[23] Manuel, *Περὶ ὀνειράτων*, ed. Boissonade, 246.1–6: Ἢ γὰρ τοὺς βλέποντας μόνον, ἢ ἑτέρους, ἢ ἀμφοτέρους τούς τε βλέποντας ἅμα καὶ τοὺς ἀκουσομένους ὤνησεν ἀεὶ φανέν τι παρὰ Θεοῦ, ἐγρηγορόσι τε καὶ καθεύδουσιν, ἀγαθοῖς τε ἀνδράσι καὶ μὴ τοιούτοις, ὧν τοσαῦτα τὰ παραδείγματα καὶ τοῖς πᾶσι γνώριμα, ὡς εἶεν ἄν περίεργον ἀριθμεῖν.

[24] For an easier comparison of the text in MS *Leidensis Voss. gr.* 49 with that edited by Delatte out of MS *Paris. gr.* 2419, the relevant excerpt from the *Leidensis* was transcribed in the appendix to the present chapter.

[25] ‘ἐὰν ἴδῃ τις ὅτι ποιεῖται ὁμιλίαν μετὰ μοναζουσῶν ἐρωτικῶς μέλλει εὑρεῖν πικρίαν καὶ θλῖψιν’. Ὁμιλία can indicate both social and sexual intercourse; however, the adverb ἐρωτικῶς clarifies that the dream is not about discussing with nuns but sleeping with them. The distinction between words and deeds when the interpretation of a dream pertains to something sexual is found elsewhere in the text, for example: τὰ μῆλα καὶ τὰ ροδάκινα κρίνονται εἰς ἐρωτικὴν ὑπόθεσιν· πρὸς δὲ τοὺς σώφρονας, εἰσὶ καὶ εἰς εὐφροσύνην ἄλλου πράγματος ἐφετοῦ καὶ ἀγαλλίασιν ἢ κίνησιν ἀλλ’ ὡς καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς διηγήσεως τυχηρᾶς τῆς αὐτῆς ἐρωτικῆς ὁμιλίας (ed. Delatte, 514.29–515.3); αἱ τριακονταφυλλέαις δηλοῦσιν γυναῖκας ἐρωτικὰς καὶ μεταδιδούσας εἰς εὐθυμίαν καὶ μόνον ἀπὸ λόγων καὶ οὐ δι’ ἔργων (ed. Delatte, 515.14–16). Both nuns and monks are largely missing from the Byzantine texts on dream interpretation, with the exception of a short passage incorporated into the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* in MS *Vat. Gr.* 573, fols 162v–163r; see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 99. On monastic tonsure (but not monks), in chapters of the *Oneirokritikon* adapted from its Muslim sources, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 304–19.

dreams based on excerpts from texts well known to both the interpreter and his clients is found in Artemidoros (where verses from epic, lyric and dramatic poetry are used for the purpose),[26] Jewish dream interpretation (with verses from biblical and rabbinical literature), and Islamic dream interpretation (with the Qur'ān, the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, old proverbs and verses from poetry).[27] Further, though the Greek *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* adapted the Qur'ānic passages of its Arabic sources with equivalents – whenever such could be found – from the Old and the New Testament,[28] the excerpts that we have from the dreambook of Manuel Palaiologos in both manuscripts suggest that its longer version went a step further in the same direction: its existing versions include instances where individual interpretations are justified by not only quoting Christian texts but also briefly expounding on ideas developed by Christian theology. Such an effort does not have a precedent in any of the surviving Greek texts on dream interpretation.[29] Last but not least, two instances of vocabulary choice in the *Leidensis* and its discrepancy from the *Parisinus* suggest that the longer version of Manuel's dreambook from which both are excerpted may have tended towards a higher rather than a more vernacular linguistic register: the *Leidensis* gives the Latinate ἀγξούγγιον (sic for ἀξούγγιον, Lat. 'axungia') for the Homeric στέαρ of the *Parisinus*.[30] And the *Leidensis* justifies the interpretation of cheese as care and preoccupation (that already exists in the *Parisinus* as ὁ τυρὸς φροντίδαν καὶ μέριμναν [δηλοῖ], ed. Delatte 520, 24–5) by adding ὁ τύρος (sic) τύρβη καὶ φροντίδα καὶ μέριμναν [δηλοῖ]. Interpretations of dreams based on puns – a method widely attested from Antiquity to modernity in various traditions (Artemidoros, Jewish, Islamic, Byzantine, Freud)[31] – can be found elsewhere in

[26] See Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά* (as above, n. 4), 27.

[27] On the Qur'ān and the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad (*ḥadīth*) used as sources for Islamic dream interpretation, see Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition*, 108–22; on poetry used in manuals of Arabic dream interpretation, see Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition*, 29, 36, 54, 88.

[28] The process is explained in Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 353–91.

[29] For example, Manuel 40, ed. Delatte, 522.23–6 (discussing baptism), and Manuel 44, ed. Delatte, 523.14–15, (reflecting the gospel of Matthew 25.33.2 and its patristic elaboration).

[30] As an electronic search among the texts of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (conducted in April 2009) reveals, both στέαρ and ἀξούγγιον can found in Greek medical literature of the Roman and Late Antique period; στέαρ is amply explicated in Byzantine lexicography, and is also used in the dreambook attributed to Patriarch Nikephoros; yet ἀξούγγιον can be considered as closer to the register of everyday parlance during the late Byzantine and early Ottoman period (the time that the text and its manuscripts were written) because it made it into Modern Greek vocabulary as ξύγγι, whereas στέαρ did not.

[31] Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, 39–40; for an interpretation based on a pun in Artemidoros, the Arabic tradition of dream interpretation and the

Manuel's dreambook. The particular pair τύρος/τύρβη used in the *Leidensis* is based on the acoustic resemblance of the word for 'cheese' with a rather learned word for 'disorder', 'confusion', 'turmoil', which is attested in the classical period (Xenophon), is explicated in the Byzantine lexicographical tradition and is used by Byzantine authors of the high and middle style (especially as it occurs in much-read patristic literature) but does not make it into texts in the vernacular.[32]

The *Leidensis* and the *Parisinus* are related because they both contain not only excerpts of Manuel's dreambook but also closely related versions of the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*; this makes it very likely that the genealogy of their contents goes back to a common ancestor.[33] Further, as far as the composition of this ancestor is concerned, the dreambook associated with Manuel seems to have relied directly on the Greek text of Artemidoros for all elements shared between the two texts,[34] which suggests that the author of this dreambook could

Oneirokritikon, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 188–98.

[32] This evaluation is based on a universal electronic search for the word on the *TLG* (conducted in April, 2009); the word is not recorded in E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (New York and Leipzig, 1888); of the two other dictionaries on Byzantine vernacular texts (E. Kriaras, *Λεξικό της μεσαιωνικής ελληνικής δημώδους γραμματείας* [Thessaloniki, 1968–] and E. Trapp et al., *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts* [Vienna, 1994–]), neither has reached the letter τ.

[33] On the basis of their arrangement of chapters (transposing the final chapter in Drexl's critical edition to the very beginning of the work), three MSS among the approximately 30 of the *Oneirokritikon* can be considered as belonging to the same group: MSS *Leidensis Voss. gr.* 49, *Paris. gr.* 2419, and *Bononiensis*, *Bibl. Univ.* 3632, all of them copied in the fifteenth century. On the manuscript tradition of the *Oneirokritikon*, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 92–111. MS *Leidensis Voss. gr.* 49 contains only parts from the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* (in a version organized somewhat differently than the text printed in the critical edition by F. Drexl, *Achmetis oneirocriticon* [Leipzig, 1925]). In this manuscript, excerpts from the dreambook of Manuel Palaiologos appear at the very end of the *Oneirokritikon* without identifying their provenience and as if they are part of the same text. It is possible, however, to guess that they are an addition because the beginning of all earlier chapters is marked by writing the chapter number (in Greek letters corresponding to numbers) at the margin of the page on which a particular chapter appears, whereas such indications are missing from the pieces of Manuel's text added to the *Oneirokritikon*. For a description of MS *Leidensis Voss. gr.* 49, see K.A. de Meyier, *Codices Manuscripti* 6. *Codices Vossiani graeci et miscellanei* (Leiden, 1955), 157; see also Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 108–9; for MS *Paris. gr.* 2419 in Cumont, *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*, vol. 8.1, 20–63. On the connection between the *Parisinus* and the *Bononiensis*, see M. Mavroudi, 'Occult Science and Society in Byzantium: Considerations for Future Research', in P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium* (Geneva, 2006), 24–5.

[34] To cite but a few examples pertinent to women: Manuel's chapter on wells, cisterns and vessels (ed. Delatte, 512) interprets these dream symbols as women; the same is done in Artemidoros 1.66 (wells), 2.27 (cisterns), 1.66 (vessels). Manuel interprets partridges as women (ed. Delatte, 513.19) as in Artemidoros 2.46. Manuel interprets apples and peaches

read Artemidoros' high-register Greek and most likely could also reproduce it in his own compositions. Significantly, Manuel's epistle to Andreas Asan, though it does not specifically mention Artemidoros, utilizes both his conceptual categories and technical vocabulary in order to distinguish between meaningless and meaningful dreams (*enypnia* vs *oneirata*).[35] It is therefore plausible that the author of the text was the emperor himself or somebody very close to the imperial environment.

It is impossible to date either the dreambook or the epistle to Andreas Asan at any precise point within Manuel's long life; yet it is tempting to speculate that Manuel, who was in especially cordial relations with the Mamluks of Egypt but was increasingly threatened by the Turks, often with tragic results, and also authored a series of dialogues refuting Islam,[36] could recognize and was bothered by the Islamic pedigree of the so-called *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* and sought to substitute it with something more appropriate to the concerns of his court that would rival it in length and coverage of dream symbols. Indeed, Manuel's overall literary output demonstrates his engagement with broader concerns of the Byzantine intellectual and professional classes that went beyond the immediate military and diplomatic issues he faced as a ruler. Since the end of the thirteenth century – and as part of a longer interaction that had started centuries earlier – there was a steady stream of medical, astrological and astronomical ideas imported from the Muslim world, both Persian and Arabic speaking.[37] Comments found within the Byzantine written sources (not yet collected or cumulatively evaluated by Byzantinists) suggest that the importation of these ideas challenged views about cosmology and the constitution of the human body that were established in important and influential segments of Byzantine society throughout the fourteenth century.[38] An analogous phenomenon throughout the

as an amorous affair (ed. Delatte, 514); this is similar to Artemidoros 1.73. Manuel interprets an oil lamp (κανδήλα) as a woman (ed. Delatte, 519.27); similarly Artemidoros 1.74.

[35] Artemidoros 1.1; pointed out by I.R. Alfageme, 'La epístola περὶ ὀνειράτων de Manuel Paleólogo', *Cuadernos de filologia clásica*, 2 (1971), 244 (though Alfageme's report on Artemidoros' categories is inadequate).

[36] Ed. E. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos, Dialoge mit einem 'Perser'* (Vienna, 1966).

[37] For a discussion of these translations, see M. Mavroudi, 'Late Byzantium and Exchange with Arabic Writers', in S.T. Brooks (ed.), *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia, (New Haven, CT, 2007), 62–75.

[38] For the reception of these ideas in the circle of Nikephoros Gregoras, see Mavroudi, 'Late Byzantium and Exchange with Arabic Writers'; on the professional antagonism of Byzantine with Syrian doctors (without, however, reference to ideological differences), see Maximos Planoudes, letter 12, ed. P.A.M. Leone, *Maximi monachi Planudis epistulae* (Amsterdam, 1991); for a treatment offered by a Syrian doctor criticized by a Byzantine one as inadequate, see Ioannes Actouarios, *De Urinis* 6.5, ed. I.L. Ideler, *Physici et medici*

Latin-speaking world over the long twelfth century has been amply illuminated by Ricklin, who has investigated how new medical theories imported from the Islamic world during this period influenced the medieval Latin discussion on dreams.[39] In doing so, Ricklin has included both Arabic and Byzantine ideas about dreams current in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Of course, by the Palaiologan period, the introduction of Islamic philosophical and scientific ideas to Byzantium was the product of its interaction with not only the Muslim world but also Latin Christendom that had begun to receive and continuously rework Islamic philosophical and scientific ideas at least since the twelfth century. One can trace these interactions in Manuel's epistle on dreams addressed to his cousin Andreas Asan,[40] which rests on the substratum of a larger philosophical discussion, conducted since Antiquity, on the nature of the human soul, an innate ability of which (due to its divine quality) is divination through dreams. The constitution of the soul is discussed in further texts produced or read at around the same time, including an epistle addressed by Matthew Kantakouzenos (Manuel's maternal uncle) to his daughter Theodora.[41] In Platonic fashion, Matthew's letter identifies the functions of the soul as threefold, pertaining to the three parts of the soul *thymoeides*, *logikon* (sic), *epithymētikon* and associates them with the physiology of the human body.[42] Dreams are said to be connected with the *thymoeides*, to which imagination also belongs.[43] Both Matthew and Manuel discuss the results of the physiological interaction between body and soul and are therefore inevitably connected with the Byzantine theory and practice of medicine and

graeci minores, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1842), 165.9–25. S. Kourousis, *Τὸ ἐπιστολάριον Γεωργίου Λακαπηνοῦ-Ἀνδρονίκου Ζαρίδου (1299–1315 ca) καὶ ὁ ἰατρὸς ἀκτουάριος Ἰωάννης Ζαχαρίας (1275 ca–1328). Μελέτη φιλολογική* (Athens, 1984–85), 140, suggests that the Syrian in Planoudes' letter may be the same as the one mentioned by Aktouarios. A physician with an Arabic name is known to us from a medical manuscript of the fourteenth century: Abraham, son of Solomon (Ibrahīm b. Sulaymān), an imperial *aktouarios* and *archiatros* of Mangana. See A. Kousis, 'Quelques considerations sur les traductions en grec des œuvres médicales orientales', *Πρακτικὰ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν* 14 (1939), 209.

[39] T. Ricklin, *Der Traum der Philosophie im 12. Jahrhundert. Traumtheorien zwischen Constantinus Africanus und Aristoteles* (Leiden, 1998).

[40] *PLP* no. 1486.

[41] Matthew Kantakouzenos, *Τοῦ αὐτοῦ βασιλέως κυροῦ Ματθαίου τοῦ Καντακουζηνοῦ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ θυγατέρα κυρὰν Θεοδώραν τὴν Καντακουζηνὴν Περὶ τῶν τριῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων*, ed. I. Sakkelion, *Παρνασσός* 11 (1888), 278–84.

[42] Cf. Plato, *Republic* 440e, discussing the θυμοειδές, λογιστικόν, ἐπιθυμητικόν. The correspondence of these to different parts of human physiology according to Plato is also summarized by Diogenes Laertios, *Vitae Philosophorum* 3.67.

[43] Matthew Kantakouzenos, ed. Sakkelion, 280: ὁ παθητικὸς νοῦς ἤτουν ἡ φαντασία. Divination is not discussed any further in Matthew's letter. His reference to 'sagacity regarding the future' (ἀγχίνοια τῶν μελλόντων: ed. Sakkelion, 281), refers to reasonable knowledge and planning of the future rather than divination.

medical astrology as it was being transformed through the imports from the Islamic world since the late thirteenth century. In broader philosophical terms, discussions of body and soul are also connected with beliefs about the constitution of the universe (for example, the central question whether the universe and the human soul are God's creations within time or eternal), and are explicitly linked together in a text much read during the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century, as its manuscript tradition and references in other texts indicate: this is the Greek translation of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and its commentary by Macrobius prepared towards the end of the thirteenth century by Maximos Planoudes.[44] It is clear that Planoudes' reading of Cicero and Macrobius was important in fourteenth-century discussions on dream interpretation because Nikephoros Gregoras, in his commentary on Synesius' treatise on dreams, used Planoudes' Greek terms rendering the five categories of dreams outlined in chapter i.3.1–10 of Macrobius' commentary.[45] A surviving letter addressed by Gregoras to Manuel's paternal grandfather, John Kantakouzenos, indicates that Gregoras had sent Kantakouzenos a copy of his commentary on Synesios.[46] Gregoras' commentary discusses further methods of divination, including divination from chance movements of the human body.[47] These are also summarily referred to in Manuel's letter to Andreas Asan, where they are condemned as untruthful.[48] This evidence allows us to trace three generations of men and women within the imperial family who had reflected on dream interpretation within a broader philosophical and cosmological framework and were conversant with some of the same key texts. The extensive and variegated antecedents and afterlife of this discussion are reflected in the paraphrases of and commentaries on three Aristotelian texts from the *Parva naturalia* ('On Sleep and Waking', 'On Dreams'

---

[44] The most recent edition of Planoudes' translation of the *Somnium Scipionis* is A. Pavano, *Maximus Planudes, M. Tullii Ciceronis somnium Scipionis in graecum translatum* (Rome, 1992). Planoudes' translation of Macrobius' commentary on it was published in A.C. Megas, *Μαξίμου Πλανούδη μετάφρασις τοῦ ὑπομνήματος εἰς τὸν ὄνειρον τοῦ Σκιπίωνος τοῦ Μακροβίου* (Thessaloniki, 1995), where an overview of the prolific manuscript tradition of both translations can also be found, on pp. xi–xxxv.

[45] Gregoras does not explicitly mention Planoudes' translations, but clearly used them for several of his comments on Synesios: *Nicephori Gregorae*, *Explicatio in Librum Synesii 'de Insomniis'*, ed. P. Pietrosanti (Bari, 1999), xlvii. For Planoudes' Greek text, see *Μαξίμου Πλανούδη μετάφρασις*, ed. Megas, 17–19; on Nikephoros Gregoras using Planoudes' translation of Macrobius' commentary, see Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, *testimonia* on 74 (l46 C 172, 01).

[46] Nikephoros Gregoras, letter 120, ed. P.L.M. Leone, *Nicephori Gregorae, Epistulae* (Matino, 1982–83); also printed in Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, 132–3.

[47] Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, 7.23–8.12 (l32 B l46, 09).

[48] Manuel, *Περὶ ὀνειράτων*, ed. Boissonade, 246.6–8: οἰωνοῖς τισι καὶ τοῖς τῶν μελῶν ἀπροαιρέτοις κινήμασι καὶ παλμοῖς.

and 'On Divination in Sleep') that were produced between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries by Michael of Ephesos, Sophonias, George Pachymeres, Theodore Metochites and George-Gennadios Scholarios.[49]

Further, theoretical discussion on and practice of divination was *de rigueur* in Byzantine learned circles in the fourteenth century;[50] Gregoras' commentary on Synesius' treatise on dreams, particularly popular from the fourteenth until the sixteenth century as its manuscript tradition suggests,[51] shows how far this discussion must have reached for texts, since it included works that do not figure prominently in the overall Greek literary record as it came down to us: Gregoras makes explicit reference to a passage in Cicero's *De divinatione*, following closely the Latin text but without giving a word-for-word translation of it.[52] Since no Greek translation of this text is known, and Gregoras did not read Latin,[53] the question of how he was acquainted with this passage calls for some reflection. We must postulate either a now lost translation or ready access to informants, both factors that greatly complicate our effort to understand the development, sources and points of reference utilized in Palaiologan philosophical discourse, which was clearly informed by ideas expressed not only in Greek and Latin but also Arabic, Persian and Hebrew.[54] Gregoras' awareness of – and disagreement with – aspects of imported philosophical and scientific ideas (especially those originating in the Islamic world) is evident in a passage of his *Roman History* that criticizes the adoption of this foreign wisdom in Byzantium.[55] The linguistic expression of this passage, repeating much of the same vocabulary, can be found in a re-dedication of Gregoras'

[49] See H.J.D. Lulofs, *De somno et vigilia liber, adiectis veteribus translationibus et Theodori Metochitae commentario* (Leiden, 1943), ix–xxx; see also Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, 111 n. 21. The Greek texts of Pachymeres and Metochites (with the exception of Metochites' paraphrase of 'On Sleep and Waking') remain unpublished but are accessible in sixteenth-century printed Latin translations.

[50] See, for example, the narrative of Gregoras on several omens and their interpretations quoted by K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 1 (Venice, 1872), λε′ff.

[51] See the manuscript tradition and the dates of manuscripts outlined in Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, lxxvii–lxxix.

[52] In Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, 7.23–8.12 (l32 B l46, 09), Gregoras used the example of an omen narrated in Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.46.103 and cites his source: ταῦτα διέξεισι τοῖς περὶ μαντικῆς ὁ σοφὸς Κικέρων.

[53] R. Guilland, *Essai sur Nicéphore Grégoras* (Paris, 1926), 78.

[54] On the translation of originally Hebrew astronomical texts into Greek and on a translation of Persian astronomical tables from Greek into Hebrew in the late Palaiologan period, see *Georges Gémiste Pléthon, Manuel d'astronomie*, ed. A. Tihon and R. Mercier (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1997), 10–13; a scholarly exploration of the philosophical and scientific heritage of the Byzantine Jews (whether in Hebrew or in Greek) has hardly begun.

[55] This passage is analysed in Mavroudi, 'Late Byzantium and Exchange with Arabic Writers', in Brooks (ed.), *Byzantium* (as above, n. 37).

commentary on Synesios to Eudocia Palaiologina,[56] where he also takes issue with Indian and Persian wisdom translated into Greek. Since the topic of the commentary is dream interpretation, the 'Indians and Persians' he cites possibly refer to the sources that the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* presents itself as using in its introductory paragraphs and throughout its chapter division. Even though the *Oneirokritikon* was translated and adapted into Greek in the tenth century, Gregoras here views it as part of the same stream of imported wisdom that steadily arrived to Byzantium via Trebizond and Italy from the end of the thirteenth century onwards, which he also criticizes in his epistolography.[57] Both in the *Roman History* and the rededication of the commentary to Synesios, he insists on the chronological priority and higher quality of ancient Greek wisdom, though he suggests that in his own composition he will not be bound by ancient authority because he will agree with some opinions of the ancients and disagree with others.[58]

In spite of the fact that modern scholarship has attempted to be exhaustive regarding Manuel's ancient and patristic sources,[59] the letter begins with a paragraph that also implies his disagreement with earlier philosophical traditions and foreshadows the ambiguity of its conclusion: Andreas Asan asked him whether he agrees with the position that all dreams are truthful and lie only when humans fail to interpret them correctly. The question was addressed to Manuel while sitting by a fire lit to warm up a bitingly and unexpectedly cold spring. This information on the season of the year and temperature speaks volumes to those familiar with an ancient and basic principle of dream interpretation (recorded, among other texts, in Plutarch's *Moralia*,[60] Artemidoros' *Oneirokritika*[61] and the ultimate chapter of the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*)[62] that dreams are most veridical in the spring because plants and

[56] On the rededication and the identity of Eudocia Palaiologina, see Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, xxxvi–xxxvii.

[57] Gregoras, letter 40, ed. Leone, titled: Τῷ Πεπαγωμένῳ περὶ τῶν ἐλθουσῶν αὐτῷ τερατολογιῶν τῶν μὲν ἄνωθεν ἐκ Τραπεζοῦντος τῶν δὲ κάτωθεν ἐξ Ἰταλίας.

[58] The text of the rededication of the commentary to Eudocia Palaiologina can be found in Gregoras, *Explicatio*, ed. Pietrosanti, 123–9, esp. 128–9.

[59] This is the purpose of many notes in the text's edition by Boissonade and of the thrust of Alfageme, 'La epístola περὶ ὀνειράτων de Manuel Paleólogo' (as above, n. 35); Calofonos, 'Manuel II Palaiologos: Interpreter of Dreams?' (as above, n. 14), highlights the text's originality, without neglecting to place it within the context of ancient Greek and Latin sources, as well as later Byzantine texts on dreams.

[60] *Questiones Conviviales* 10 (Stephanus 734 C 7).

[61] Artemidoros does not discuss this in detail, but only broadly in what he says about time as one of the six elements of dream interpretation, especially in 4.2.

[62] For the inclusion of this principle in Arabic books on dream interpretation, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 158.

nature are in a phase of growth (contrary to autumn, when plants and nature are waning). What does this unseasonably cold weather mean for the veracity of dreams? Manuel does not say, but ambiguity is implied, reflecting the letter's ambivalent final paragraphs concluding that dream interpretation can yield both truthful and mendacious results. This is a letter rooted in the here and now, while the ancient tradition is at the background and knowledge of it is assumed, not rehearsed. Indeed, Manuel indicated that he considered novel much of what he said: he briefly referred to the abundant philosophical and medical literature on dreams and their provenience in order to explain that he will not attempt to discuss it because it is too voluminous, but will briefly summarize it and add something of his own.[63] Once we grant the novelty of his conclusions (that is, once we understand that he is using ancient vocabulary in a new way in order to respond to problems of his day rather than remain strictly within the confines of a venerable pagan and patristic tradition), the aspects of dream interpretation that he chooses to discuss within such a short space obtain added significance: his position on the veracity of some dreams because of their divine provenance and the role of angels and planets in it can be understood as Manuel's reply to differing schools of thought current not in pagan and patristic Antiquity but towards the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Though not directly stated in the letter, Andreas' position to which Manuel reacts is in concert with the view recorded in several ancient authors read in the late Palaiologan period (Plato, Xenophon, Cicero in *De divinatione*,[64] Philo Judaeus and so on)[65] that during sleep the soul is freed from the influence of the body, comes closer to its divine qualities and therefore can look unhindered into the future. Manuel counters that not all dreams are truthful because some are caused by the physical and mental constitution of the dreamer and his profession; and that during sleep the soul is still hindered by possible influences of the body, such as a full stomach or desires. Therefore, the ability of the soul to foretell the future is muddled. In the course of discussing what makes the soul divine and immortal (and therefore in principle innately capable of divination, though external natural causes limit this ability), Manuel mentions that it is equal to angels and superior to the planets. The particular choice of these two comparisons suggests that Manuel is responding to issues raised in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, the first two parts of which

[63] Manuel, *Περὶ ὀνειράτων*, ed. Boissonade, 240.22–7: πολλαῖς μὲν οὖν ἀφορμαῖς τοῖς ἰατρῶν δοκεῖ παισί, καὶ δὴ καὶ φιλοσόφοις, φύεσθαι τὰ ὀνείρατα, ὧν τὰς πλείους παρίημι, εἰς μακροτέρους ἢ δίδωσιν ὁ νῦν καιρὸς λόγους ἐμπίπτειν ἀναγκαζούσας· περὶ δὲ τῶν αἳ καὶ τὸν κόρον πάντως ἐκφεύξονται, καὶ τὸ ἀρκοῦν ἀποδώσουσι, λέξων ἔρχομαι, προσθήσων τι καὶ παρ' ἐμαυτοῦ.

[64] We have seen earlier that Gregoras is conversant with this text.

[65] References to these texts can be found in the footnotes to Manuel, ed. Boissonade, as well as Calofonos, 'Manuel II Palaiologos: Interpreter of Dreams?' (as above, n. 14), 452.

(Prima, Prima Secundae and Secunda Secundae) were translated into Greek by Demetrios Kydones (1324–98) during Manuel's lifetime.[66] Kydones occupied important positions in the successive governments of John Kantakouzenos, John V and Manuel himself, and also became Manuel's mentor. It is therefore not at all surprising that the letter to Andreas Asan would engage with Kydones' intellectual production. Manuel's insistence on the equality of the human soul with angels opposes the assertion of the *Summa Theologiae* 2:2, 172.2 (a section on the cause of prophecy translated by Kydones): 'Now the Divine ordering, according to Dionysius [*Coel. Hier*. iv; *Eccl. Hier*. v], is such that the lowest things are directed by middle things. Now the angels hold a middle position between God and men, in that they have a greater share in the perfection of the Divine goodness than men have. Wherefore the Divine enlightenments and revelations are conveyed from God to men by the angels. Now prophetic knowledge is bestowed by Divine enlightenment and revelation. Therefore it is evident that it is conveyed by the angels'.[67] As for the celestial bodies, Manuel's view that they are inferior to the human soul also comes into sharp contrast with the importance attached by Thomas to the impact of the celestial bodies on the imagination of humans;[68] in addition, it can be construed as a criticism against astrology, one of the great intellectual pursuits of the fourteenth century in Byzantium.[69] Medieval scholasticism intensively discussed issues of cosmology (including the role of angels in it) in response to the introduction of rival intellectual systems from the Muslim world in the course of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.[70] Though we know very little about how much Muslim cosmology was known in Byzantium,[71] it is reasonable to expect that

[66] See *Δημητρίου Κυδώνη, Θωμᾶ Ἀκυινάτου Σούμμα θεολογικὴ ἐξελληνισθεῖσα*, ed. G. Leontsines and A. Glykophrydou-Leontsine (Athens, 1976), 14.

[67] Translation quoted from Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St Thomas Aquinas*, Second and Revised Edition. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920) [available on line at http://www.newadvent.org/summa/ last viewed 2 May 2009]. This part of Kydones' Greek translation remains unpublished; it would be interesting to compare his vocabulary of technical terms with that of Manuel.

[68] A. Altmann, 'Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy?', *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 3 (1978), 11, and T. Litt, *Les corps célestes dans l'univers de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain and Paris, 1963).

[69] On astrology in the fourteenth century, see P. Magdalino, *L'orthodoxie des astrologues* (Paris, 2006), 160–161.

[70] D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York and Oxford, 1998), 18.

[71] With two exceptions that have been somewhat discussed in modern scholarship: elements of Arabic cosmology that appear in the dialogue *Hermippos* and the other two dialogues that are associated with it in the manuscript tradition, on which see F. Böll and C. Bezold, 'Eine arabisch-byzantinische Quelle des Dialogs Hermippos', *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse* 3.18 (1912); and the knowledge of Avicenna and Averroes by Georgios Scholarios

something equivalent happened there due to the introduction of ideas from the Muslim world from the end of the thirteenth century onwards. Investigation in this direction can radically alter our understanding of Byzantine intellectual life throughout the Palaiologan period, and must not only identify what ideas were imported and where they came from, but also take into consideration why they were chosen for importation and how they were transformed in their Byzantine context in order to serve the purposes of Byzantine society. Such an approach would represent a much needed corrective to older and more recent scholarship that tends to view the literary production of the Palaiologan period as subservient to either the heritage of Antiquity or its encounter with the Latin West, to which the creation of much that modern scholars view as 'original' to the Palaiologan period is credited. Especially in what regards the study of Byzantine fiction, it is no exaggeration to say that modern scholarship has painted a picture whereby, through the vernacular Greek adaptation and translation of Western models, the moribund body of Byzantine literature receives the kiss of life from its Western counterpart.[72]

The problem of received tradition versus innovation and the transferability of ideas from one culture to another presents itself not only regarding theoretical discussions in dreams, but also in the nuts and bolts of the practice of dream interpretation as reflected in the manuals used for the craft in the Greek and Arabic Middle Ages. The cultural transfer regards the transcendence of chronological boundaries within the same linguistic realm at widely distant moments in history and therefore within radically different cultural and material surroundings (for example, the use of the Greek Artemidoros in Antiquity and the Byzantine period); and the crossing of the same text into a different linguistic and cultural realm through translation (for example, the ninth-century translation of Artemidoros from Greek into Arabic, and the tenth-century translation of Arabic material into Greek in order to compose

---

and his rival, Georgios Gemistos/Pletho, discussed in F. Masai, 'Pléthon, l'Averroisme et le problème religieux', in P.M. Schul (ed.), *Actes du colloque international sur le néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), 435–46.

[72] A corrective moving away from this picture can be found in P.A. Agapitos, 'In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands. Fiction and Fictionality in Byzantium', in P.A. Agapitos and L.B. Mortensen (eds), *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction: From the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, c. 1100–1400 (*Copenhagen, 2012), 235–367. The picture seems to persist in the study of Byzantine philosophy: in his useful cumulative assessment of the Greek-Latin philosophical interaction from antiquity until the Ottoman period, S. Ebbesen, 'Greek-Latin Philosophical Interaction', in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources* (Oxford, 2002), 15–30, views this process in terms of a 'dominant' and a 'subservient' culture; Latin philosophy had the upper hand from the thirteenth century onwards, though the Byzantines do not seem to take much notice as the Greek philosophical tradition with its concepts and technical terms weighed too heavily on their shoulders.

the Greek *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*). This problem needs to be taken into consideration whenever we try to use the manuals on dream interpretation in order to understand the function of female sexuality and gender in the Greek and Arabic Middle Ages. There can be no doubt that, when compared with each other, the experience of sexuality and gender in the Graeco-Roman world, in Byzantium, and in the medieval Islamic world, are vastly different. In addition, none of these three civilizations, all of them temporally and geographically extensive, can be treated as a large undifferentiated block, but has to be nuanced regarding changes that occur within time and space. However, certain elements in the sexual attitude conveyed by Graeco-Roman and Islamic sources are consistent; they could broadly be identified as male dominance, regarding penetration as the central sexual act, and evaluating differently in terms of social acceptance the active and passive role in male homosexuality.[73] The consistency of these elements should be counted among the reasons that enabled the Islamic appropriation of Graeco-Roman medical literature. As for the transfer of Graeco-Roman dream and medical literature to Byzantium, modern scholarship has viewed Byzantine scientists as adhering to ancient authorities for their most important concepts and as dedicated antiquarians rather than practitioners actively engaged with the scientific problems of their day. This contrasts sharply with the way ancient science is viewed. To illustrate the problem with an example from the realm of dream interpretation: to a modern scholar's mind, there is no doubt that Artemidoros reflects the intellectual and social conditions of the second century directly, and not through a distorting mirror.[74] Though he acknowledges his debt to an earlier tradition on dream interpretation (which did not survive into the

[73] Byzantine attitudes towards homosexuality have been minimally discussed by modern scholars. For a recent nuanced and informed discussion, including earlier bibliography, see K. Pitsakes, "Η θέση των ομοφυλοφίλων στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία', in C. Maltezou (ed.), *Πρακτικά ημερίδας: Οι περιθωριακοί στο Βυζάντιο* (Athens, 1993), 171–269. The relevant pages in J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago and London, 1980) offer misguided conclusions. K. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant. Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago, 2004), and S. Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (London and New York, 2008) touch upon homosexuality and gender, but their main focus is eunuchs, which constitutes an entirely different subject.

[74] I am referring to the famous 1975 essay by C. Mango, 'Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror', *Inaugural Lecture, University of Oxford, May 1974* (Oxford, 1974), repr. in his *Byzantium and Its Image* (London, 1984), pt. II. It argues that highbrow Byzantine literature is written in a dead language that creates a certain distance between the author and the subject discussed; the result is a lack of specificity (that is, Byzantine texts are generally deprived of markers that would betray the time and place of their production) and a dichotomy between literature and a changing reality, which, according to Mango, 17, is one of the salient features of Byzantine culture in general.

modern period, therefore we cannot compare Artemidoros' work with it),[75] he insists on his own critical intervention regarding the older material: he states that he recorded only what was still valid, and corrected what was inaccurate based on fieldwork, first-hand observation and practical experience. And we believe him. Yet we would not instinctively extend the same kind of faith to a Byzantine author on a technical subject, though he may have been working based on the same principles: received tradition corrected and supplemented by recent experience. The problem of received tradition is equally acute for all three medieval traditions (Greek, Latin, Arabic) for which we have the ancient tradition to compare them with. Modern scholarship tends to divide cultures in 'original' (antiquity) and 'derivative' (Middle Ages),[76] though such a division is generated by our own criteria of evaluation as well as the availability of the record that makes each period seem so.

Further proof of the active engagement of Byzantine scientists with the problems of their day and their desire not to limit themselves to what they had received from antiquity is the Byzantine translations of Arabic scientific texts from Arabic, Latin and Persian, from the tenth century until the end of the Byzantine period,[77] the role of which in the history of Byzantine science can come into sharper focus only if more of them get published.[78] Another fruitful avenue in order to retrieve chapters in the history of Byzantine science is the publication and examination of the Byzantine commentaries on ancient authors (in the form of annotations on the margins of a manuscript or as independent texts); the more recent study of the medieval Latin and Arabic philosophical and scientific traditions has increasingly recognized the role of commentaries in not only explicating pre-existing ideas but also creating new knowledge, and Byzantine studies can also benefit from this shift in the perspective of modern scholarship regarding medieval science written by cultures neighbouring

---

[75] The point is also made in C. Grottanelli, 'On the Mantic Meaning of Incestuous Dreams', in Shulman and Stroumsa (eds), *Dream Cultures*, 146.

[76] The same is pointed out in Agapitos, 'In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands'.

[77] For a discussion of Byzantine translations from Arabic into Greek, mainly until the tenth century, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 392–429; for the later period, see Mavroudi, 'Late Byzantium and Exchange with Arabic Writers', in Brooks (ed.), *Byzantium* (as above, n. 37).

[78] A major step forward is the publication of the 'Corpus des astronomes byzantins' under the directorship of A. Tihon since 1983; nine volumes have appeared to date. For the scope of the project, see the introduction by A. Tihon in *Nicéphore Grégoras*, *Calcul de l'éclipse de soleil du 16 juillet 1330*, ed. J. Mogenet, A. Tihon, R. Royez, A. Berg (Amsterdam, 1983), 7–8; also A. Tihon, 'Un projet de corpus des astronomes byzantins', *JÖB* 31 (1981) = *Akten des XVI. internazionales Byzantinistenkongress* 1.2/1 (no pagination), and R. Browning, 'Projects in Byzantine Philology', *JÖB* 31 (1981) = *Akten des XVI. internazionales Byzantinistenkongress* 1.1, 3–64.

Byzantium in languages other than Greek. Indeed, Gregoras' commentary on Synesios is an important and original discussion of fourteenth-century philosophical problems pertaining to divination. But, for the social historian who would attempt to use scientific texts, not only those produced, but also those used by the Byzantines, the ancient and the Arabic material poses much of the same problem that the ancient material absorbed in Byzantine science does: there is evidently a great difference between the social reality of ancient and medieval times; and Christian Byzantium and Medieval Islam did subscribe to different social practices. Is it true then that Byzantine scribes and practitioners of the applied sciences considered it worth their while to copy, study and evidently rely on texts applicable to situations indeed divorced from Byzantine reality?

Technical treatises on any scientific subject (a category that, in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, included divination) can be very telling about social attitudes. Dream manuals, for example, let us know what their authors (and by implication the society around them) considered ideal about its male and female members in terms of outward appearance, moral standards, sexual behaviour and attitudes towards money and material possessions (though not necessarily in that order). They also include deviations from the ideal norm that evidently did occur within the same society. Further, they allow us to conclude whether the clientele expected to request an interpreter's services is male or female (though sometimes given the types of questions asked the sex of the inquirer is immaterial).

In the beginning chapter of his *Care of the Self* (the third and last volume of his *History of Sexuality*), Michel Foucault used Artemidoros in order to dissect social attitudes towards sex prevalent in Graeco-Roman Antiquity and addressed the question of Artemidoros' expected readership and clientele. The average client that Artemidoros had in mind was, as Foucault already pointed out,[79] male and relatively well off (has a household, slaves, a business). However, Artemidoros (and every dream interpreter in his tradition, including the medieval Arab dream interpreters, the author of the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* and Freud himself) emphasizes that the correct interpretation of a dream is completely dependent on the sex and social position of a dreamer; therefore, the dreams of women, as well as those of the immensely rich, the excessively poor and slaves, are also recorded, even if only occasionally and as an aside.

The same can be said of the average dreamer in medieval Arabic dreambooks (including the early eleventh-century work by al-Dīnawarī addressed to the reigning caliph)[80] and in their Byzantine offspring, the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*

[79] M. Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, trans. R. Hurley (New York, 1992), 7. For a summary of Foucault's discussion and a comparison with medieval Arabic books on dream interpretation, see M. Mavroudi, 'Women, Gender and Representation of Sexualities and Gender-Dream Literature', *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, vol. 5, 406ff.

[80] Al-Dīnawarī, Abū Saʿīd (or Saʿd) Naṣr b. Yaʿqūb (d. ca 1020 CE), *Kitāb al-Qādirī fī-l-taʿbīr*; see the discussion of this author by Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition*, 59–64.

(even though its translation and compilation was likely commissioned by a tenth-century Byzantine emperor).[81] The dreambook of Manuel Palaiologos, another dreambook with royal pedigree, also seems to have addressed a primarily male dreamer (a female dreamer is mentioned only twice in the extant excerpts),[82] though its target audience, as we have seen, seems to be members of the aristocracy resident in Constantinople, in other words a much more limited social strata than the other dreambooks.

Artemidoros, toward the end of his book one, gives a series of chapters on sexual intercourse that Foucault analysed in order to understand second-century attitudes regarding sex.[83] Briefly, explicitly, matter-of-factly (the way a good technical manual is expected to do) and without passing moral judgement, Artemidoros discusses dreaming of heterosexual or homosexual intercourse and other forms of sexual encounter with a wide array of partners, including spouses, prostitutes, other known and unknown men and women (either dead or alive), male and female slaves, one's children, one's siblings, one's mother and animals. Artemidoros organizes these chapters according to what he considers as natural and licit, illicit, and unnatural, and makes it clear that he only condones the missionary position.[84]

Compared with Artemidoros, Byzantine texts on dream interpretation are more reticent, though they do not, of course, completely shrink from treating topics considered taboo by a strict Christian moralist. The topic of sexual intercourse in the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* is discussed not in a separate section as in Artemidoros, but in two lengthy chapters titled 'On women according to the Indians' and 'On women according to the Persians and Egyptians'.[85] Sexual intercourse is also occasionally mentioned in chapters that have nothing to do with women, such as in the two on dreaming of 'the dead, and death, and burial';[86] or the two on bestiality;[87] or in the chapter titled 'On faith, according to the Egyptians', that includes dreaming about having intercourse with the Pharoh.[88] In the two chapters of the *Oneirokritikon* on women, sex is an important, though not the only, activity connected with them. Talking with a woman, seeing her pregnant or giving birth, buying a female slave, drawing

---

[81] See Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 59–62.

[82] Manuel 32: 'On a woman ornamenting herself' (ed. Delatte, 520); Manuel 39: 'On being pregnant' (ed. Delatte, 522), though the indefinite pronoun 'τις' could be applied to both a man and a woman dreamer.

[83] Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, 3–36.

[84] Artemidoros 1.78–80.

[85] Achmet 127 and 128, ed. Drexl, 76.10–82.8.

[86] Achmet 131, ed. Drexl, 85.26–86.2; 88.23–4.

[87] Achmet 133 and 134, ed. Drexl, 89.12–90.5.

[88] Achmet 14, ed. Drexl, 11.24–6. The reason for this peculiar placement is discussed in Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 147.

milk from the breasts of a woman by hand, clothing or adorning a woman with jewellery are other dreams recorded in the same two chapters. These discuss women in order of social importance: older women first, younger next and then prostitutes and concubines. Occasionally men and children (though not necessarily in a sexual context) pop up in the two chapters on women. One's lawful wedded wife is discussed in the same paragraph as prostitutes and concubines, though she does receive more attention further in the chapter as mother of the dreamer's children, or as someone whom the husband adorns, or at least clothes (Drexl 81.8ff.). A fornicating wife and a fallen virgin daughter are also mentioned (Drexl 80.24–81.2). Dreaming of having sex with one's mother and sister is briefly interpreted (Drexl 81.3–4). Homosexual sex with a young man or a eunuch is a possibility, though it is best not to be caught (Drexl 79, 1-4); another possibility is finding out that a woman one is having intercourse with has male, instead of female, genitals (Drexl 77.20–24). Maxims summarizing the relation between husband and wife are offered a few pages apart. They are seemingly contradictory, but to this day anyone familiar with Mediterranean societies knows that both of them can be true at the same time: 'A woman is a man's power and authority',[89] and 'and the head of the woman is the man',[90] a statement lifted almost word-for-word from St Paul.[91] It is significant to point out that the neighbouring chapters in the *Oneirokritikon* discuss flirtation and matchmaking, as well as the wedding party, vaguely linking the sexual with the legal and ceremonial aspects of marriage (a logic that the *Oneirokritikon* clearly inherited from its Arabic sources). Unlike this arrangement, Artemidoros discusses intercourse in the context of a series of chapters on things that make life pleasant and are connected with evening symposia: food, perfumes, dancing, singing, wearing a wreath, copulating, sleeping; end of book one. Women and matrimony belong to a totally different part of the work: matrimony appears in ii.65, right after a series of chapters on the dead and death and before a chapter on the swallow that signifies death; women are discussed in several chapters throughout the work, most systematically in i.50 which covers dreams about transformations of parts of the human body or the entire person. Since the aristocratic dreambook of Manuel Palaiologos is less clearly arranged – at least in the versions that we have it – no conclusions can be drawn from the position of its chapters relevant to women; in addition, it contains no explicit reference to sexual intercourse. Sexual desire (implicitly heterosexual) is discussed as a generally pleasant experience, though acting on the impulse of and fulfilling this desire is a folly; especially in women, but also in men, it is synonymous

[89] Drexl 74.8: Ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς δύναμις καὶ ἐξουσία ἐστίν.

[90] Drexl 81.14–15: κεφαλὴ γὰρ τῆς γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνήρ.

[91] 1 Corinthians 11:3: κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνήρ.

with moral destruction.[92] The morality implicit in Manuel's dreambook does not seem to agree with the way he led his life, given that he seems to have fathered illegitimate children[93] and, in his *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*, he treats marriage as a primarily political affair, without saying anything explicit about the sexual aspects of matrimony.[94] In other words, the fulfillment of sexual desire strictly within the boundaries of marriage does not seem to have particularly preoccupied him in practice.

In all three Greek dreambooks vessels, wet cavities or cavities holding water, beds and bedding, stools and generally objects on which one sits or mounts are, as a rule, interpreted as women. This, of course, does not qualify Artemidoros and the Byzantine authors as pre-Freudians, it only demonstrates the degree to which Freud himself was influenced by the symbolic language developed by his predecessors, and especially Artemidoros, whom he mentions explicitly in his *Interpretation of Dreams*.[95] The inferior social position of women with regard

---

[92] For example: 'Apples and peaches are interpreted as an amorous affair. But for the chaste (σώφρονας) they can indicate the pleasure and delight derived from something else that is desirable, or an attraction (κίνησιν) even in their case, resulting from a chance narration of the said amorous affair' (Manuel, ed. Delatte, 514.29–515.3); 'Rose bushes indicate women who are desirable (γυναίκας ἐρωτικάς) and whose joy is infectuous through their words alone, not by way of their deeds' (515.14–16); 'an oil lamp (κανδήλα) is interpreted as a woman; if it is extinguished, the woman is either going to die or lose her virtue (σωφροσύνην); if a virgin lives in the house and the oil lamp is extinguished by a flying bird, the virgin will be corrupted by a stranger; because the light of the oil lamp represents the lit torch (λαμπάδα) of her soul' (519.23–8); 'if someone dreams that he lost his broad-brimmed hat, if he is still a virgin he will lose what constitutes his virtue (τὸ τῆς σωφροσύνης εἶδος αὐτοῦ) and will fall into debauchery (ἀκολασία)' (521.9–14). Cf. also kissing the child of a woman who is not one's wife (522). The English translation of Manuel's text by S.M. Oberhelman, *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet: a Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams* (Lubbock TX, 1991), was unavailable to me; the above translations are my own.

[93] See J.W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1969), 474–8.

[94] Manuel Palaiologos, *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*, ed. A.D. Angelou (Vienna, 1991).

[95] Older scholarship in the twentieth century had observed the similarities between Artemidoros, Freud and Jung and interpreted them not as the result of Freud's and Jung's direct knowledge of Artemidoros, but as elements of modern 'truth' that Artemidoros managed to approach, even if imperfectly, 18 centuries ago; see, for example, H. Bender, 'Prognose und Symbol bei Artemidor im Lichte der modernen Traumpsychologie', in *Artemidor von Daldis. Traumbuch* (Basel, 1965), 355–69. For a critique of this teleological approach, see S. Price, 'The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), 3–37; see also the discussion in Mavroudi, 'Εισαγωγή', in *Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ὀνειροκριτικά*, 40–41. An explicit exploration of the symbolic language of dreams in folklore

to men is reflected in the fact that a woman wearing male clothes and holding male paraphernalia, such as arms, is generally interpreted positively; however, if a woman carries out exclusively male tasks that would make her the focus of public attention, such as the duties of a priest, it signifies a scandalous divorce and/or public ridicule, the implicit social expectation evidently being that a decent woman keeps away from the public eye.[96] A man wearing female clothing and carrying out female tasks is considered inauspicious.[97] It is also significant that in all three Greek dreambooks, from the ancient to the Late Byzantine, the interpretation of genitals pertains exclusively to the male pudenda, with the sole exception of Artemidoros, who mentions female genitals in passing twice, and even then they occur in the dreams of men.[98] By comparison, some Islamic dreambooks offer significantly more detailed discussions on the private parts of the female body.

An interesting problem regarding the transfer of Islamic texts, not only on dream interpretation but also astrology, to Byzantium, is their treatment of polygamy, an institution known in the Islamic world, where up to four legal wives are allowed, but not applied as such in Christian Byzantium.

Polygamous relations are mentioned in the *Oneirokritikon of Achmet*, and are immediately detectable by anyone familiar with this Islamic institution; this seems to be the reason why references to polygamy are generally left out (along with a lot of other material) of the *Oneirokritikon*'s abridgement that survives in an eleventh-century Greek manuscript.[99] In the full version of the *Oneirokritikon* references to polygamy are not limited to the chapters attributed to the 'Persians' and 'Egyptians' (which openly advertize that they contain 'pagan' material), but also extend to the chapters attributed to the 'Indians' (chapters that generally set

(the kind of tradition to which dream interpretation as divination was deemed to belong at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century) by Freud himself, can be found in S. Freud and D.E. Oppenheim, *Dreams in Folklore* (New York, 1958). Women, and more specifically female pudenda, appear as containers there several times (for example 54–5; 58–60). On Freud and Oppenheim's proposal for a new understanding of this class of dreams recorded in folklore according to psychoanalysis, see ibid., 48ff.

[96] Achmet 11 and 139, ed. Drexl, 7.11–12, and 92.1–7. For an analysis of this last instance in the context of Arabic dreambooks, see Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 298–9.

[97] For men and women wearing each other's clothes, see Achmet 266, ed. Drexl, 218.1–24. For men carrying out female tasks, see chapter 262, ibid., 215.20–216.6.

[98] A man dreamt that his wife lifted her dress and showed her genitals to him, a gesture indicating contempt and signifying the troubles that she brought upon her husband (Artemidoros 4.44); for a man, dreaming that he was completely transformed into a woman has the same significance as dreaming that he only had female genitals, or clothes, or shoes, or ornaments (Artemidoros 4.83).

[99] Cf. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*, 92–8.

forth a number of overtly and recognizably Christian interpretations).[100] But does this render the interpretations of dream symbols expounded in this chapter useless in the context of Byzantine society? Though in Byzantium only one legal marriage was recognized, the institution of concubinage (*pallakeia* or *agraphos gamos*), a stable sexual relationship, often between a married man and a woman of lower status, did exist.[101] Roman law considered it legal, though Byzantine emperors and jurists from the early to the late Byzantine period adopted changing policies regarding concubines and their offspring, recognizing their rights to a varying degree. However, the continuous mention of the phenomenon in legislation, either to forbid it or to delineate its legal implications, is certain proof that it never ceased to exist, if not always as a valid legal category, at least as a constant social reality, achieving, no doubt, varying degrees of social recognition depending on the social status of the parties involved, regardless of what strictly legal sources decreed about its validity in any given century. Specifically in the environment of the imperial court, it is well known from the narrative sources that Byzantine emperors time and again used their illegitimate children to contract marriage alliances for diplomatic purposes. So in reality a Byzantine man could have more than one woman. The language of dream interpretation and other forms of divination, deliberately opaque for more than one reason (much like the language of diviners is today) through its vagueness, allowed for a number of different yet similar situations to be described under the same rubric and therefore eased the transfer of the translated treatises from the Muslim cultural and institutional context to the Christian one. The same qualities in the language of ancient Greek treatises on divination must have made it possible for their predictions to still make sense in the changed institutional, societal, religious and legal reality of the medieval period. Their continuous ability to function practically even within the context of Byzantine society, and not their antiquarian pedigree, must have been the reason why Byzantine practitioners of dream interpretation, astrology and other forms of divination returned to ancient texts time and again, in order to study and excerpt them, and even use them as sources for their own compositions.

Appendix

Transcription of the excerpts from the Dreambook of Manuel Palaiologos as found in MS *Leidensis Voss. gr.* 49, fols. 130r–v (spelling and punctuation of the MS retained; phrases and words that either do not appear in Delatte's edition out of MS *Paris. gr.* 2419 or are substantially different there are here underlined; the scribe of the *Leidensis* must have been copying Manuel's text

[100] For example Achmet 68, ed. Drexl, 43.13–24.

[101] J.H[errin] and A.K[azhdan], 'Concubinage', in *ODB*, vol. 1, 493.

out of a model that he found difficult to read (as opposed to external or internal dictation), as his misunderstanding of certain words cannot be the result of aural incomprehension; for example τολεόν for τὸ λευκὸν, τοῖὲραναίον for καὶ γεράνεον).

Τὰ φρέατα καὶ αἱ στέρναι καὶ τὰ ἀγγεία. τὰ δεκτικα ὑδάτων κρύνονται εἰς γυνέκαι [sic]. καὶ ἔαν ἴδει τίς ὅτϊ έπιεν ἐξ αὐτῶν ὕδωρ, ἡδωνὴν πληρώσει μετὰ γυνεκόν. ἔαν δὲ ἐνίψατο μόνον ὕδατος δὲ οὐκεγεύσατω, ὀμοιλείαν καὶ μόνον καὶ χαριἐντημόν ἐκπληρώσοι· πίναι γὰρ φησῆν ὁ σολομών ὕδατα ἀπὸ σῶν φρεάτων πιγῆς [*Prov.* 5.15.1] εἰ δὲ ἤδι τῖς ὡς αὕτος μακρώθεν ἢ εγγύς γενόμενοι, εἰς φρέαρ ἢ εἰς στέρναν· ἢ εἰς βρύσιν, εἰς πλουσίαν καὶ ἔνδοξον γυνέκαν συγκρύνεται:

Ἐὰν ἴδη τῆς ὅτι ἠσῆλθεν κάθηπόθεσῆν εἰς την ἀγίαν σοφίαν, γίνοσκε ὅτι εἰς καλὴν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ κόσμου βάλει [sic for θέλει or μέλλει] εὑρεθύναι.[102] Το κολίκιον τὸ μέγα κρύνεται εἰς χρόνου ἑνός παραδρομήν. Τό δέ μυκρόν κουλίκιον [sic] εἰς ενος μηνὸς παραδρομὴν· ἡ δὲ κοινός ἡ λεγομένη καλίτζα μικρὴ εἰς εὐδομάδα. ἐπτάφηθμον [sic; ἑπτάριθμον in ed. Delatte] δρῶμον· καὶ τὼ σησαμοτὸν ὁμοίος· ἑνὸς χρόνου ἐμφάνιαν· περιορησμὸν· επὶκερδῆ καὶ εὐθημον καὶ πανη χαρϊἔστατον. ἡ κανδήλα κρύναιται εἰς γυνέκαν. Οἱ μεγαλοπρεποῖς οἰκοι κρύνονται εἰς εὐδεμονίαν μεγίστην· ἐαν ἴδη τις ὅτι ποιήτε ὁμοιλίαν μετὰ μοναζουσῶν ἐρωτηκός μέλει εὑρῆν πικρίαν καὶ θλήψην· τὸ ἀγξοῦγγυον [sic for ἀξούγγιον; στέαρ in ed. Delatte] εὐλευθερίας [sic] εἶδος ἤδως παριστᾶ· τὸ ἔλεον καὶ τὸ λανέλην καὶ τω μυρον στεναχωρείαν δουλοῦσιν [sic]. Τὸ γάλα γαλήνἤ τὴν καρδείαν καὶ λογυσμὸν διατὴν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἐπιτυχίαν· ὁ τύρος [sic] τύρβη καὶ φροντίδα καὶ μέρημναν· πλὴν ὁ κυρὸς [sic; ξηρὸς in ed. Delatte]. Τὸ ὀξήγαλα γαλήνη μετὰ μείζονα εὐθιμίαν. εὔκρατον γὰρ τὸ ὀξῆ. Το χρώμα τολεόν [sic; λευκὸν in ed. Delatte] τῆς ἐσθῆτος καλὸν εἰς θέαν. Το κόκινον τοῖὲραναίον [sic; καὶ γεράνεον in ed. Delatte] ἔντιμον καὶ ἔνδοξον. Το ὀξὴν εἰς τιμὴν. Το κήτρανον [sic] καὶ τὸ πράσυνον καὶ τὸ μαύρον εἰς πικρίαν καὶ χολὴν. Τα ὑποδήματα δεσμά καὶ οἱ τούτων στέρησις καὶ ἀποβολὴ ελευθερία τῶν δεσμῶν:-

[102] This interpretation is the opposite of the general interpretation of Hagia Sophia in MS *Paris. gr.* 2419 as upheaval (ταραχή), moderated by a positive spin depending on the details of the dream (for example if one entered Hagia Sophia bearing a sword or other arms or wearing a wreath, it indicates his personal triumph within the upheaval and so on). See Manuel 27, ed. Delatte, 518.15ff. The interpretation in the *Leidensis* may be lifted (and abbreviated) from a different part of a longer chapter on Hagia Sophia, other than the one from which the version in the *Parisinus* is taken.

Chapter 11

Fluid Dreams, Solid Consciences: Erotic Dreams in Byzantium

Charis Messis

While dreams express the inner workings of the human soul they are also culturally mediated experiences,[1] since those bequeathed to us by past cultures primarily take the form of literary texts. Moreover, from a literary point of view they serve the purpose of the wider narrative in which they are embedded and their reconstitution within that narrative transforms them into a privileged site where literary versions of subjectivity are constructed. The erotic dream in particular is a highly significant aspect of the dream experience, as it targets the core of sociability: the management of sexuality. In examining this type of dream we shall attempt to explore aspects of the literary construction of the self in Byzantium.

[1] On the need for a social history of dreams, see P. Burke, 'L'histoire sociale des rêves', *Annales ESC* 28 (1973), 329–42; on a historical and anthropological approach, see B. Tedlock (ed.), *Dreaming. Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations* (Cambridge, 1989); D. Shulman and G. Stroumsa (eds), *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (New York, 1999); M. Burger (ed.), *Rêves: Visions révélatrices* (Berne, 2003). On dreams in the Western Middle Ages, see J. Le Goff, 'Le christianisme et le rêve (IIe–VIIe siècle)', in his *L'imaginaire médiéval* (Paris, 1985), 265–316; J. Amat, *Songes et Visions. L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris, 1985); J.-C. Schmitt, *Le corps, les rites, les rêves, le temps* (Paris, 2001); A. Corbellari and J.-Y. Tilliette (eds), *Le rêve médiéval* (Geneva, 2007). On dreams in the Bible, see E. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (Basel, 1953). On dreams in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, see in general P. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, 1994); G. Dagron, 'Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi. Le rêve et son interprétation d'après les sources byzantines', in T. Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo* (Rome, 1985), 37–55; D.I. Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου. Η χρήση των ονείρων στην ελληνική και ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα* (Herakleion, 1993); S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides. The Greek novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London and New York, 1996); A. Timotin, *Visions, prophécies et pouvoir à Byzance. Étude sur l'hagiographie méso-byzantine, IXe–XIe siècles* (Paris, 2010).

Erotic Dreams as a Category

We may define erotic dreams as those of erotic or sexual content, which provoke a bodily reaction in the dreamer, or as those that are interpreted as such by their dreamers. Today erotic dreams are widely held to be the key dream experience, deriving from the core of the modern self. Yet according to the oneirocritical tradition of Late Antiquity and Byzantium, erotic dreams do not constitute a separate category.[2] They belong either to the category of non-significant, trivial dreams (*enypnia*), triggered by the dreamers' everyday fears and desires, or to the category of allegorical dreams, which involve a wide variety of erotic combinations, positions and persons and foretell events concerning the dreamers' economic and social lives.[3] The erotic element in the oneirocritical tradition is therefore an epiphenomenon of social reality, while the self portrayed is represented as the social role that he or she embodies.[4]

In contrast to the *oneirokritika*, which describe a society that downplays the erotic, another category of texts highlights all its dramatic force. In magic *formulas*, complex social relationships, both fears and ambitions, are filtered through the prism of the erotic and the provocation of desire becomes the key to social interaction:[5] erotic desire, the desire for social ascent, the desire to arouse sympathy and attract the attention of social superiors – all these social relations are translated into erotic relations. Magic formulas aim at evoking or averting

---

[2] On the Late Antique categorization of dreams, see E. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1951), 102–34; A. Kassels, 'Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification', *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969), 389–424; G.T. Calofonos, 'Το ιστορικό όνειρο στο τέλος της αρχαιότητας. Η χρονογραφία του Μαλάλα και τα Ανέκδοτα του Προκοπίου', in Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου*, 281–322; R. Zamarou, *Όνειρα λογοτεχνικά. Η διερεύνηση ενός τόπου από τον Ησίοδο ως τον Αρτεμίδωρο* (Athens, 2006).

[3] In Achmet, ed. F. Drexl, *Achmetis Oneirocriticon* (Leipzig, 1925), 56–7, 58.6–9, 76–9 (cf. S.M. Oberhelman, *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet: A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams* (Lubbock, TX, 1991), 120–121, 133–6), the interpretations of erotic dreams convey hierarchical social relations, and several of Artemidoros' interpretations are reactivated. On the Arabic sources of the work, see M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book of Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, 2002).

[4] For an approach to the oneirocritical tradition in Late Antiquity and the logic behind it, see M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 3. *Le souci de soi* (Paris, 1984), 13–50; J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990), 17–44; S. Price, 'The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidoros', *Past & Present* 113.1 (1986), 3–37; V. Kalfas, 'Διάγνωση και πρόγνωση. Ο Αρτεμίδωρος και η αρχαία ερμηνευτική των ονείρων', in Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου*, 231–58; C. Stewart, 'Erotic Dreams and Nightmares from Antiquity to the Present', *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 8 (2002), 279–309; G. Bowersock, *Fiction as History. Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1994), 77–98.

[5] Winkler, *The Constraints*, 71–98; Cox Miller, *Dreams*, 121–3.

erotic dreams.[6] The self in this case becomes, through the impassioned gaze of others, a fluid object of desire.

Apart from oneirocritical and magical approaches, which serve a practical end, certain theoretical frameworks attempt to interpret the dream experience as a whole. Most Byzantine readings of the dream phenomenon condense the older typology into three categories: a) *enypnia*, b) divinely inspired dreams and c) demonic dreams.[7] The symbolic or allegorical dream that reveals the future disappears as a category but does not lose its literary presence. Personal dream experience is demoted to the category of the *enypnia*, while the fully externally determined dream experience, which involves the supernatural both in its positive (divine) and in its negative (demonic) dimension, is promoted to the category of the 'significant'. This hetero-determined dream experience covers many of the traditional categories and makes the realm of personal consciousness fluid. If the divinely inspired dream is a traditional category of dream, the demonic is a Christian obsession. In this case we are not concerned with a dream as such but with a state of mental confusion where the self is under occupation and shattered by the demon's traps. The only aspect of subjectivity that is legitimate in this state is that which is inherently divine while all its problematic manifestations are externalized. The demon function as a device for banishing guilt under circumstances that are intensely guilt-ridden.

Byzantine theoretical approaches do not treat erotic dreams as a special category of dream experience. These dreams do not occupy a central place in

---

[6] For example: *Kyranides* 1.13.23–4, 1.5.12–14, 2.23.10–12, 4.12, 4.26.2–3, ed. D. Kaimakis, *Die Kyraniden* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1976). For dreams in the magical rituals, see also S. Eitrem, 'Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual', in C. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera* (New York, 1991), 171–87.

[7] As in the *Life of Ignatios*, *PG* 105, 533C. In the eleventh century, Symeon the New Theologian (ed. J. Darrouzès and L. Neyrand, *Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques* [Paris, 1996], 158), recognizes two general categories of dream experience, visions or apparitions, and *enypnia*, which include erotic dreams provoked by the desiring part of the soul. The same distinction is accepted by Niketas Stethatos (ed. I. Hauserr, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien. Un grand mystique byzantin* [Rome, 1928], 200–202, and ed. S. Koutsas, *Νικήτα Στηθάτου, Βίος του Αγίου Συμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου* [Athens, 1994], 348–51), for whom an indication of the difference between the two dream experiences is the impression gained by the dreamer: on the one hand, unspeakable delight and indelible recollection (visions), on the other hand, insignificance and lack of recollection (*enypnia*). Michael Psellos, *De omnifaria doctrina* 116, ed. L. Westerink (Nijmegen, 1948), 63, describes five distinct categories of dreams where erotic dreams belong to the idle fancies of the imaginative power of the soul. Psellos (*Philosophica minora I* 38, ed. J. Duffy [Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1992], 142–3) reconsiders the matter in a somewhat more learned manner and divides dreams into those originating from a soul 'shrouded in the darkness of physical passion' and those originating from a soul of fine quality released in sleep from its bodily weight. Erotic dreams in this case are *enypnia* produced by an eventful life and an intense physicality.

theoretical speculation, but stand rather on the periphery: they are symptoms of the subject's crisis rather than essential components of the subject's constitution.

We shall now look at the narrative uses of erotic dreams to determine how these dreams are incorporated into the rules of narration, how they serve particular purposes of the narrative and how they follow the logic of rhetorical composition, in order to persuasively construct reality.

Erotic Dreams as Texts

Erotic dreams take two narrative forms. The first is theoretical discourse on erotic dreams and their physical and psychological consequences. The texts vary in length, cover a period from the fourth to the end of the twelfth century and concern nocturnal seminal emissions, making the latter into the central issue for the 'management' of the body and sexuality within the framework of the monastic community.[8] The second includes texts that narrate erotic dreams. This chapter will deal only with texts in this second category.

Although erotic dreams can be found in many types of text, their favoured place is in hagiography and the romance. Hagiography uses the demonic type of dream, as eroticism was perceived to constitute a sphere of demonic activity, while the romance uses the *enypnion*, in which eroticism is expressed as a personal issue. Both types are, from a literary aspect, formulaic and explore the thorny question of sexuality from different viewpoints. The first type is strikingly present up to the eleventh century, while the second thrives in the twelfth century. Our aim is to determine the nature of the dream experience contained in each of the above types and to examine whether the transition from the hetero-determined erotic dreams of Christianity to the more personal *enypnia* in the romance are an indication of the emergence of individuality or simply a way in which each type of writing, honouring its ideological and literary commitments, constructs specific versions of subjectivity.

Erotic Dreams in Hagiography

Hagiography approaches erotic dreams and eroticism generally in two ways.[9] The first primarily addresses monastic communities and secondarily the wider public,

[8] See in general, D. Brakke, 'The problematisation of nocturnal emissions in Early Christianity', *JEChSt* 3 (1995), 419–60; Stewart, 'Erotic Dreams', and C. Stewart, 'Repression in Antiquity?' *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven* 20 (2002), 181–203.

[9] C. Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις, σεξουαλικότητα και οπτασίες', in K. Nikolaou (ed.), *Ανοχή και καταστολή στους μέσους χρόνους* (Athens, 2002), 221–9. This article, powerful in its argumentation, provides a key approach to the Christian erotic dream.

while the second addresses the wider public by promoting models of sanctity within the realm of secular life. In the first case, the descriptions are simple. Struggles and anxieties are documented, as are confessions and accounts of the relentless conflict between the needs of the body and the quests of the soul. The solutions proposed are marked by empiricism, truths are tentatively uttered and certainties retreat before the devious traps of the devil. In the second case, the erotic discourse is bold, the punishments or deliverance from passions impressive and the discourse displays the sharpness of truth.[10] Yet another distinction must be made between the beneficial tales of mainly the early period and the Saints' Lives. In the former a central theme is proposed and speculation revolves around it. In this way the multiple facets of a specific issue are highlighted. In the Saints' Lives of saints the erotic dream is one of the many episodes in the life and career of a saint and serves the story's general plot.

The beneficial tales record erotic dreams while at the same time emphasizing the interpretation of the phenomenon and probably its consequences for the development of ascetic perfection. According to Palladios, when an ascetic was tormented by erotic desire provoked by thoughts and nocturnal fantasies, he would turn to the monk Pachon, who explained to him the reasons for this phenomenon. The erotic dream, Pachon claimed, may be an indication of the precocity or the perfection of the ascetic; it can indicate a body that continues to be replete with fluids, a soul tormented by thoughts, but also a level of perfection that provokes the envy of demons. In practice, therefore, the erotic dream becomes irrelevant as a reliable measure of the monk's spiritual progress. The story ends with an account of the personal experience gained by Pachon who had been tormented for a long time by similar occurrences.[11] In the same collection of edifying tales, Moses the Ethiopian gives advice on how to prevent erotic *enypnia*: vigilance and prayer, physical exertion and mental concentration are the strongest weapons for warding off these unpleasant experiences.[12] A third solution is the most drastic, but intended only for a very small number of chosen people: erotic dreams and temptations in general can be avoided more effectively with the help of divine intervention that can be invoked during the dream-like state of incubation, thereby sparing the ascetic

[10] The same distinction can also be found regarding the subject of the erotic dream. Monks and laymen, whether protagonists or secondary characters in the story, become the victims of temptation, but the narrative differs depending on the victim targeted. See Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 227.

[11] Palladios, *Lausiac History*, ed. G. Bartelink, *Palladio, La storia lausiaca* (Verona, 1998), 128–32. For further examples of the beneficial tales, see Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 223–6, and A. Kazhdan, 'Byzantine Hagiography and Sex in the Fifth to Twelfth Centuries', *DOP* 44 (1990), 131–43.

[12] Palladios, *Lausiac History*, ed. Bartelink, 98–102.

from temptations forever. The ascetic Elias dreams that three angels pin him down and castrate him.[13]

In later Byzantine hagiography, acts of divine intervention that provide a final solution to the problems of eroticism become a literary *topos* for explaining the resilience of saints in the face of the temptations of the flesh.[14] This category represents a dream response to the onslaught of lustful desires. Since erotic experience is acquired from the outside, its treatment, in order to be effective, has to invoke external intervention.

The above examples target monastic communities: the victims of the dream experience are monks and the function of the dream, which is usually not described in detail – in most cases it is merely mentioned as having occurred – is to enable the community to discuss one of its real and tormenting problems. This can also be seen in the case of Saints' Lives, when the recipients of erotic dreams are the saints themselves. In such cases the narrative does not place emphasis on the dream itself, but on the saint's resistance to temptation. Recording the dream adds to the literary construct of saintliness and becomes part of the contours of the saint's daily life. Antony the Younger, for example, was subjected to overwhelming temptation which he was advised by his confessor to ignore as 'these things happen and unhappen rapidly'.[15]

Descriptions intended for a wider public are quite the opposite, however. There, experience takes on the hallmarks of an imaginative erotic scenario whose plot sometimes includes magic. The recipients of emphatically demonic and magical erotic dreams are weak ascetics or laymen, and the victim's erotic dream usually serves as a way to highlight the saintliness of the protagonist. In other words, many times they function as beneficial tales within the context of a wider Life.

The story of Eustathios, a banker in seventh-century Alexandria,[16] is such an edifying tale, which was presumably addressed to a wider public. Eustathios was a devout layman who decided initially to remain chaste during conjugal life and later retired to a monastery. Temptation, however, manifested its malicious intentions and Eustathios had a dream in which the erotic element was shrouded with the horror of eternal punishment: lustful Ethiopian women and snakes,

---

[13] Palladios, *Lausiac History*, ed. Bartelink, 144–6.

[14] On other examples, see John Moschos, *Spiritual Meadow*, *PG* 87, 2856 (abba Conon); *Life of Loukas of Steiris* 36, ed. D. Sophianos, *Όσιος Λουκάς* (Athens, 1993), 144. On the case of Patriarch Methodios, see John Skylitzes, ed. I. Thurn, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Berlin and New York, 1973), 86–8.

[15] *Life of Anthony the Younger*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Συλλογὴ παλαιστινιακῆς καὶ συριακῆς ἁγιολογίας*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg, 1907), 207–8.

[16] J. Wortley, 'The dream of Eustathios', *Byzantion* 52 (1992), 424–32; S. Efthymiadis, 'Living in a City and Living in a Scetis: The Dream of Eustathios the Banker (BHG Nov. Auct. 1317d)', *ByzF* 21 (1995), 11–29.

erotic provocation and unbearably foul odours, beatings and coprophagia compose a picture of eroticism that coincides with an extreme form of coercion. Moral instruction takes on the aspect of Revelation. The dream is recorded as a dramatic introduction to the interpretation that follows and includes every form of sin: prostitution, slander, pride, vanity, gluttony and so on. The erotic stimulus that provokes the guilty fantasy is a metaphor for the fallen man, and the dream experience develops into a generalized critique of current human conduct.

Characteristic examples of laymen afflicted by erotic temptation can also be found in Saints' Lives.[17] One such incident is recorded in the *Life of Andrew the Fool* (seventh or tenth century),[18] where demons are involved in the erotic dream by means of the use of magic. A woman resorts to a magician to coax her spouse into the marital bed. The spell works, the marriage is saved, but only superficially. The woman pays too high a price for conspiring with dark forces. Through successive dream experiences she realizes her tragic mistake. In her dreams she becomes the victim of sexual assaults by aged negroes and dogs, and she herself indecently embraces statues.[19] Sexuality is translated into a brutal mania. The erotic dreams are then followed by dreams involving the consumption of excrement, reptiles and frogs as symbols and surrogates of eroticism. All the victim's bodily orifices are under a state of siege. The consequences of the erotic dreams are eventually neutralized and order restored by a series of God-sent dreams that reveal the nature of the magical experience and confirm the deliverance of the victim through the intervention of St Andrew's disciple, Epiphanios.[20]

Lastly, there are pious dreams that may provoke erotic side-effects upon waking, though they are interpreted as part of the divine dispensation. Accordingly, in a tale of incubation included in the collection of miracles performed by Kosmas and Damianos, a paralytic dreamt that the saints urged him to 'sleep' with the mute woman lying next to him in the infirmary. The dreamer

---

[17] Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 226.

[18] On the date of the text, see C. Mango, 'The Life of St. Andrew the Fool Reconsidered', *RSBS* 2 (1982), 297–313 (seventh century), and L. Rydén, 'The Life of Basil the Younger and the Date of the Life of St. Andrew Salos', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), 568–86 (tenth century). Despite the fact that the majority of scholars agree with Rydén, the question remains open.

[19] *Life of Andrew the Fool*, ed. L. Rydén, *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, vol. 2 (Uppsala, 1995), 170.2425–176.2523.

[20] *Life of Andrew the Fool*, ed. Rydén, 176.2525–2557. Epiphanios himself felt his body burning with temptation and 'even in his sleep he (the demon) made him dream that he was mixing with filthy women and having intercourse with sin' (178.2557–67; cf. 188.2720–190.2074). On the incident see G.T. Calofonos, 'The Magician Vigrinos and his Victim: A Case of Magic from the Life of St Andrew the Fool', in J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic. Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (London and New York, 2008), 64–71. For examples from other Saints' Lives of the period, see Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 225–6.

justifiably doubts the authenticity of this request and the saints appear three times making the same request until he is persuaded to attempt the move. In a state of shock the mute woman finds her voice to denounce the would-be rapist, while the paralytic manages to take to his heels and escape punishment.[21] The holy purpose of healing in this case transcends and thereby 'neutralizes' what otherwise might have been seen as sinful and heinous behaviour ('for they did not give this order for him to make love to the woman, as some might imagine, but to provide a sign path to health/salvation for both of them', tells us the text), as the true intention of the saints, who display a considerable sense of humour, was the salvation of the two patients and not their sexual corruption.

We may conclude that erotic dreams occupy a peripheral place in hagiographical narratives and that their narrative use is rendered meaningful under specific circumstances and in particular contexts. Authors prefer to describe living erotic temptations and resort to the use of dreams only when they run out of options, in part because temptation in dreams cannot be explained in terms of physical presence.[22] Erotic dreams in hagiography that are deemed worthy of recording are presented as demonic interventions and not as the result of a personal psychological process: they are the outcome of external interference that alters the conscience and forces the consent of the dreamer. This is why – at least in the case of hermits – no clear distinction is made between the dream experience and the waking event. Hence temptation-filled dreams are usually not described as dream-like, but as true experiences,[23] while often enough actual experiences are immersed in the atmosphere of a dream. Monks occupy a hazy spiritual geography where the transcendental and physical worlds have no clear defining contours; experiences are fluid and sensations deceptive. The focus of concern is multiform temptation not as a mental *process* but as a *state* originating from outside. As Christine Angelidi notes, 'it is conceived as a single cluster of stimuli that is decoded as a whole'[24] on the basis of a strictly structured Christian grammar of sensations. The subject constructed by these narratives experiences an intense and undefined threat, which is interpreted as a kind of erotic aggressiveness that must be endured so that he or she may be reconstituted as a Christian subject. The role of the victim also defines gender

[21] *Kosmas and Damianos* 24, ed. L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian. Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1907), 162–4. For a translation and analysis of the text, see J. Wortley, 'Three Not-So-Miraculous Miracles', in S. Cambell and others (eds), *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1992), 159–68, repr. in his, *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204* (Farnham, 2009), pt. IX.

[22] D.I. Kyrtatas, 'Τα όνειρα της ερήμου. Πειρασμοί και εσχατολογικές προσδοκίες των πρώτων χριστιανών ασκητών', in Kyrtatas (ed.), *Ὄψις ἐνυπνίου*, 264; Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 222.

[23] MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides*, 103–4.

[24] Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 227.

identity. The protagonist of the story, whether man or woman, becomes the vehicle of a Christian version of gender, projecting a kind of gender paradox: a new masculinity is invested with some of the social characteristics of femininity (victimization) in order to be juxtaposed with the imaginary construct of a socially masculinized femininity (demanding, provocative and violent) that is identified with the demonic. Concepts of gender become sufficiently pliable material from which to form the new subjectivity of the saint.

In its Christian reading the erotic dream is thus seen as a manifestation of demonic envy and reflects the monk's struggle to gain full control of his conscience. But it sometimes becomes a medium of an implicit dialogue. From the eleventh century onwards, some Byzantine authors accuse the Latin clergy of hypocrisy, namely for invoking the demonic nature of the *enypnia* as a cheap means of deflecting personal guilt. In the twelfth century, the Metropolitan of Kyzikos, Constantine Stilbes, describes how Western clergymen deliberately staged conditions to produce *enypnia* (impenetrable darkness and absolute silence – 'dark and unseen beneath the covers of their bed')[25] so as to receive their lovers and consider their embraces as unconscious and therefore 'innocent', dream-inspired acts. Sexual conduct is one of the main pillars defining alterity. But given that, in reality, we are dealing with a monologue within the boundaries of a given cultural community, the transgressive behaviour of *others* is condensed into an inversion of our own code of values and lays bare the unspoken fears that are being cultivated within our community. The fear of ourselves is projected and externalizes as the fear of others.

Erotic Dreams in Secular Literature

Instances of erotic *enypnia* in secular literature are rare and comply with the literary commitments imposed by the particular literary genre. Just one example has survived in epistolography. The tenth-century courtier, Theodore Daphnopates, in his letter written on behalf of the *protospatharios* and *asecretis* Basil (Ouranos) on the occasion of a friend's marriage, describes the effects of an erotic dream: 'I was awoken by a tickling sensation and distended hands, my innards in turmoil and my liver afire, reeling and shaken as a boat tossed by the waves'.[26] This dream experience occurs simultaneously with the actual sexual experience of his now married friend, as they discover during a meeting the following day. The letter

[25] J. Darrouzès, 'Le mémoire de Constantin Stilbès contre les Latins', *REB* 21 (1963), 70.159–62.

[26] Theodore Daphnopates, letter 17, ed. J. Darrouzès and L. Westerink *Théodore Daphnopatès, Correspondance* (Paris, 1978). Cf. the interpretation of P. Odorico, 'L'indicible transgression', in M.-T. Fögen (ed.), *Ordnung und Aufruhr im Mittelalter* (Frankurt am Main, 1995), 301–12.

ends with a wish: may the friend take pleasure in his erotic activity, while the sender, who declares that he is too weak for real sexual contact – perhaps he is a eunuch who feels the urge but is unable to act on it – continues to fuel his lust vicariously, by means of the erotic adventures of his friends.[27] This is clearly an ironic verbal game, the context of which escapes us, but which explores and highlights the boundaries of Byzantines' tolerance for erotic language.

In twelfth-century court poetry, we find a verse commentary on the erotic dream. Addressing Manuel Komnenos, Manganeios Prodromos refers to a tale also recounted in the treatise written by Zonaras in the same century on *Natural outflow* (*physikē ekroē*).[28] The tale, set in Egypt, can be traced back to Plutarch,[29] but Manganeios attributes it to the royal figure of Solomon, considered the archetypal king by the Byzantines.

A man falls madly in love with a woman and is willing to sacrifice a large part of his estate to win her over. Disappointed by the lady's refusal when she asks for an even greater price, he confines himself to having his fill of her in an erotic dream. Sexually satisfied, she now becomes an object of his indifference and ridicule. Enraged by his contempt and the financial loss she has incurred, she turns to the royal judge demanding fair payment for the dream intercourse. His ruling orders that the man keep his estate and the woman receive the shadow of the promised goods, since 'she gave the shadow and the image in an erotic intrigue, and received the shadow of what was promised'.[30]

The tale reminds Manuel of a stipend that was promised to the poet but never in fact given,[31] yet it acts as a literary image enlightening the rules of a classic erotic game, the relationship of supply and demand that reveals the psychology of sexual tension between men and women, at least as seen through the eyes of men in twelfth-century Byzantium: natural male arousal and female avarice before the act, male indifference and wounded female vanity following sexual satiety.

The tale is just one in a series of traditional reasons used for denigrating femininity, a victim of which even the poet claims to be. The male motif is natural urges while the female motif is the acquisition of a kind of power. The sexual act, even in a dream, restores the natural order and pouring ridicule on a woman both satisfies and relieves the male reader.

---

[27] Theodore Daphnopates, letter 17.22–8.

[28] Manganeios Prodromos 7, ed. S. Bernardinello, *Theodori Prodromi de Manganis* (Padova, 1972); cf. G. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, vol. 4 (Athens, 1852), 598–611.

[29] Plutarch, *Life of Demetrios* 27, ed. R. Flacelière and G. Chambry, *Plutarque Vies*, vol. 13 (Paris, 1977), 48–9.

[30] Manganeios Prodromos 7.81–2, ed. Bernardinello; cf. P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 453–4.

[31] Manganeios Prodromos 7.92–7, ed. Bernardinello.

The 'erotic' novel, or romance, revived in the twelfth century, might be expected to provide a privileged environment for eroticism and consequently for the erotic dream.[32] In these texts, however, with the exception of the work of Makrembolites, eroticism is not the issue in question. The main theme in them all is marriage contracted out of a love that does not spring from a deep and close acquaintanceship, but is a sudden infatuation, akin to an illness,[33] between two young and beautiful people.

The romances that survive in complete form contain dreams, which elicit and facilitate erotic emotions,[34] but only in the work of Makrembolites is the erotic *enypnion* widely used.[35] Maybe this and its relatively simple language have contributed to his huge popularity.[36]

---

[32] General overview of the twelfth-century romances in R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance* (Cambridge, 1989). A relevant analysis of the romances within the general intellectual atmosphere of the twelfth century, in A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), 256–76, and A. Kaldellis, 'Historicism in Byzantine Thought and Literature', *DOP* 61 (2007), 1–24, esp. 4–9. For the particular historical context, see also E. Jeffreys, 'The Comnenian Background to the Romans d'Antiquité', *Byzantion* 50 (1980), 455–86. The dating of Makrembolites' novel varies from 1070s (K. Plepelits, *Eustathios Makrembolites. Hysmine und Hysminias* [Stuttgart, 1989], 5–6) to 1166 (C. Cupane, 'Metamorphosen des Eros', in P. Agapitos and D. Reinsch (eds), *Der Roman in Byzanz der Komnenenzeit* [Frankurt am Main, 2000], 54), with the possibility of 1130–35 (P. Agapitos, 'Poets and Painters: Theodoros Prodromos' Dedicatory Verses of his Novel to an Anonymous Caesar', *JÖB* 50 [2000], 184–5; I. Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure. Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eumathios Makrembolites' Hysmine and Hysminias* [Uppsala, 2001], 16–18) and 1150 (P. Magdalino, 'Eros the King and the King of *Amours*: Some Observations on *Hysmine and Hysminias*', *DOP* 46 [1992], 202). The question remains open.

[33] H.G. Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon* (Munich, 1986), 136–59. On Byzantine literary approaches to love, see also P. Odorico, 'L'amour à Byzance. Un sujet de rhétorique?', *Europe* 822 (1997), 34–46.

[34] On the dreams in the romances, see McAlister, *Dreams and Suicides*, 115–52 (comparative analysis of the dreams), 183–6 (brief presentation of the dreams in Prodromos), 186–9 (the dreams in Eugeneianos). See also the review of this book by C. Cupane, *BZ* 91 (1998), 166–71.

[35] M. Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*', *BMGS* 3 (1977), 23–43, and M. Alexiou, *After Antiquity. Greek Language, Myth and Metaphor* (Ithaca and London, 2002), 111–27; Nilsson, *Erotic pathos*, 103–10.

[36] F. Meunier, *Roman et société à Byzance au XIIe siècle* (Doctoral thesis; Villeneuve, 2001), 325; on *Hysmine and Hysminias*, 103–9. A revised form of the thesis is published as: *Le roman byzantin du XIIe siècle. A la découverte d'un nouveau monde?* (Paris, 2007).

In Makrembolites' romance, comical, yet intensely ironic language,[37] sets the scene as the story begins with the herald Hysminias' visit to Eurykome, where he finds accommodation in the house of a nobleman who has a daughter, Hysmine. The daughter falls in love with Hysminias and in a series of 'significant' erotic moves, tries to seduce him. Her advances go unheeded and the boy in all innocence poses the crucial question in the romance: who teaches love? The answer provided by Kratisthenes, the hero's friend and companion, is at the same time the answer of an entire society: love cannot be taught, nature is the school.[38] Nature schools him through dreams.

The first dream occurs after the two friends' visit to the garden[39] where they see an image of the god Eros.[40] In the dream Eros appears with his companions, turns Hysminias into a slave and turns him over in chains to Hysmine.[41] Hysminias wakes from sleep to find that he has undergone a psychological transformation.[42] The first dream, a kind of *chrematismos* (divinely inspired dream), is the reason for Hysminias' decision to respond to Hysmine's provocation from then on. Whatever first emerges within Hysminias' consciousness is brought to fulfilment in the second dream, this time an *enypnion*, in which 'whatever I asked to see, to suffer and to perform, I saw and I suffered as in a mirror, in dreams'.[43] I see, I suffer, I act indicate the process through which the hero gradually matures. From a simple spectator, he initially becomes a passive object to finally be transformed upon awaking into a mature agent. This dream is one of the most erotic in Byzantine literature: daring caresses, kisses and bites, erotic fight and diffuse lust. While in real time the daughter takes the initiative

[37] Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal', 37–8; Cupane, 'Metamorphosen des Eros', 39; Nilsson, *Erotic pathos*, 148–9, 283–6. Meunier, *Roman et société,* 306–308, discerns in the text comical elements and traces of parody.

[38] *Eustathius Macrembolites De Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI*, ed. M. Marcovich (Munich and Leipzig, 2001), 1.14. All romances are also edited by F. Conca, *Il romanzo bizantino del XII secolo* (Turin, 1994); Makrembolites on 499–687. Here I use the edition of Marcovich.

[39] On the function of the garden in the romance, see Nilsson, *Erotic pathos*, 97–103; I. Nilsson, 'Spacial Time and Temporal Space: Aspects of Narrativity in Makrembolites', in Agapitos and Reinsch (eds), *Der Roman,* 99, describes it as 'the 'true' setting of the novel'.

[40] *Hysmine and Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 2.7. On the image of Eros in the romance, which is implicitly considered as a criterion for its dating, see C. Cupane, 'Ἔρως βασιλεύς: La figura di Eros nel romanzo bizantino d'amore', *Atti dell'Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Palermo*, ser. 4, 33 (1973–74), 243–97, and Cupane, 'Metamophosen des Eros', 39–54. Cupane states the likelihood of the influence of Western models on the 'tyrannical' typology of Eros that appears in the romance. A different view is expressed by Magdalino, 'Eros the King', who insists on the Byzantine roots of this particular love imagery.

[41] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 3.1.

[42] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 3.2.1.

[43] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 3.5–7.

in erotic provocation, in the dream the gender is reformulated: Hysminias adopts the social rhetoric of masculinity, is transformed into a man who takes the initiative in love-making and assumes the corresponding aggressiveness, confining Hysmine to the role of the passive receptor and the potential victim of a penetration.[44] This love game involving attack and defence culminates in direct bodily symptoms: a wet dream.[45] So Hysminias' first erotic experience is in a dream and constitutes an important step in his advance to manhood.[46] Following this experience the hero goes on to carry out successive sexual attacks in real time, each more daring than the last, all of which are fortuitously interrupted at the crucial moment, while Hysmine attempts to strike a balance between her desire and the need to preserve her virginity. In Hysminias' first-person narrative, femininity is a projection of his own subjectivity, made up of his fears, anxieties and desires, not reality:[47] Hysmine, at the beginning, is perceived as a threat to his innocence but, once he has been initiated in love and found his 'real' masculine identity, she is reduced to modesty (αἰδώς), the social rhetoric of femininity.[48] Hysmine is not a real but a virtual figure adapted to the hero's changing psychology and his steps toward maturity.[49] Hysminias also shares his thoughts with his friend Kratisthenes regarding each erotic step he has taken, which he describes as 'the chase'. Masculinity in the romance is constructed in a dual way: as a preference for the other sex in sexual relations and a preference for the same sex in companionship.

As the narrative continues, a series of dreams portrays the hero's awareness as he progresses from painless pleasure to guilty reality. A purely erotic dream is followed by a dream of marriage.[50] It appears though that the idea of marriage

---

[44] P. Agapitos, 'Ἀπὸ τὸ 'δρᾶμα' τοῦ ἔρωτα στὸ 'ἀφήγημαν' τῆς ἀγάπης. Τὸ ἐρωτικὸ μυθιστόρημα στὸ Βυζάντιο (11ος–14ος αἰώνας)', in C. Angelidi (ed.), *Το Βυζάντιο ώριμο για αλλαγές* (Athens, 2004), 69–70, argues that the rhetoric of persuasion was used by men, while women displayed the rhetoric of resistance.

[45] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 3.7.7.

[46] Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal', 41.

[47] Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal', 37. The same scholar in her, 'After Antiquity', 122, seems to revise her position by expressing the opinion that Hysmine's portrait calls to mind that of Chloe in the work of Longus.

[48] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 4.23. On the image of women in the text, see C. Jouanno, 'Women in Byzantine Novels of the Twelfth Century: an Interplay between Norm and Fantasy', in L. Garland (ed.), *Byzantine Women. Varieties of Experience 800–1200* (Aldershot, 2006), 141–62. See also J. Burton, 'Abduction and Elopement in the Byzantine Novel', *GRBS* 41 (2011), 377–409.

[49] Jouanno, 'Women in Byzantine Novels', 159–60, attributes the portrait of Hysmine in Makrembolites to the possible influence of the Western *chansons de geste*. But there is no support for this attribution.

[50] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 5.1, 5.2.

sows the first seeds of anxiety in Hysminias' soul as the next dream develops into a nightmare.[51] It is erotic to begin with, but at the climactic moment Hysmine's mother, Panthia, appears with an army of maenads representing society's conventions, intent on punishing the *thief*.[52] This dream teaches Hysminias the dangers of unbridled sexuality. Sexuality must be a product of marriage and not a prerequisite for it. Otherwise, the social cost is enormous. The first part of the romance comes to an end with the hero being fully aware of the joys but also the dangers of sex. The narrative then leaves the sphere of dreams and reverts to action. Erotic *enypnia* vanish and only two predictive dreams featuring the god Eros take place: the first foretells the wedding ceremony, which is taken as divine approval of the abduction of the heroine,[53] while in the second Eros rescues Hysmine from the waves into which she was cast by the sailors as they took flight.[54]

There are two categories of dreams in Makrembolites' work. First, the dreams in which Eros himself appears and brings about sudden changes in the situation of the heroes. These are 'god-sent' dreams that help the plot to develop and prove to be prophetic despite the protagonists' occasional doubts regarding the nature of their dream experience.[55] Their status as erotic reflects their outcome rather than their content. Second, there are the genuinely erotic dreams with sensual content generated by physical or psychological processes, which belong to the category of the *enypnia*, as 'the soul in love remoulds all things into love, even the thoughts and phantoms in the dream',[56] and serve as a means of sexual education.

The romance chooses the dream as a means of education in matters of the body, sex and manhood. It has been noted by others that the description of erotic dreams provides the author with an alibi for effectively and safely dealing with risqué sexual discourse.[57] Their role in the romance, however, is not to substitute for erotic scenes occurring while the protagonists are awake, but to multiply them.[58] Additionally, both dream categories function as keys to the narrative. Without erotic dreams would be neither development in the plot nor progress

---

[51] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 5.3.3–5.4. See also Nilsson, *Erotic pathos*, 225–7.

[52] On this episode, see C. Jouanno, 'Sainte ou furie? Quelques figures de la mère à Byzance', *Kentron* 10 (1994), 111–25, esp. 118–23.

[53] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 6.18.

[54] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 7.18–19.

[55] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 7.10.3 and 7.19.

[56] *Hysmine et Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, 10.4. 2 and 5.5.4. Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal', 40, classifies dreams using modern-day criteria into 'dreams of wish-fulfillment and dreams arising from guilt, anxiety or fear'.

[57] Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal', 42; McAlister, *Dreams and Suicides,* 164; Jouanno, 'Women in Byzantine Novels', 156–7.

[58] Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, 107, 110; Meunier, *Le roman byzantin*, 104.

to maturity for the characters. The leading events in the story occur during the waking hours of consciousness, having first been foretold in dreams.

Could, therefore, this particular use of dreams be considered as a literary comment revealing the renewed interest in Aristotle in certain intellectual circles, or perhaps as voicing criticism of religion to the benefit of science, as claimed by McAlister?[59]

Knowledge of the causes of *enypnia* is not a twelfth-century discovery, but a common *topos* running throughout the entire Byzantine era. The *gnomologia* devote considerable space to the *enypnia*, reproducing basic Aristotelian positions in their otherwise Christian readings.[60] Yet the literary activation of the *enypnia* is not a result of an interest in Aristotle, but of the revival of interest in the ancient romance, where divine 'counselling' dreams and *enypnia* comprise the main categories of dream.[61] Makrembolites' romance is not a denunciation, but a literary game and it does not aim at supporting some kind of political and religious modernity. Nor is it a theological allegory[62] that would likely have moved a Byzantine intellectual. A number of scholars have overstated the psychological nature of the work and believe that Hysminias' first-person narrative is a type of erotic autobiography, not found elsewhere in Byzantium.[63] The incorporation of erotic *enypnia* as initiatory topoi in autobiographical writings derives from the way in which Christian writers in Late Antiquity reformulated the content of the erotic *enypnion* of the ancient novel.

In one of his autobiographical poems, Gregory of Nazianzos mentions the dream that persuaded him to remain celibate and devote himself to God.[64] This dream differs radically from the classic erotic *enypnion* despite using the same

---

[59] S. McAlister, 'Aristotle on the Dream. A Twelfth-Century Romance Revival', *Byzantion* 60 (1990), 195–212; McAlister, *Dreams and Suicides*, 160, 164. Meunier, *Roman et société*, 348, interprets the heroes' homonymy as an indication of the platonic perception of love and wonders if the romance constitutes 'un conte philosophique', the product of a renewed interest in Plato and neo-Platonism.

[60] For example, S. Ihm, *Ps.-Maximus Confessor. Erste kritische Edition einer Redaktion des sacro-profanen Florilegiums Loci communes* (Stuttgart, 2001), chapter 58 (on enypnia); E. Sargologos, *Un traité de vie spirituelle et morale du XIe siècle. Le florilège sacro-profane du manuscrit 6 de Patmos* (Thessaloniki, 1990), chapter 44; *Melissa*, chapter 43, *PG* 136, 765–1244.

[61] Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 86–93.

[62] Plepelits, *Eustathios Makrembolites*, 29–69.

[63] R. Beaton, 'The World of Fiction and the World "out there". The Case of the Byzantine Novel', in D. Smythe (ed.), *Strangers to Themselves. The Byzantine Outsider* (Aldershot, 2000), 185; Magdalino, 'Eros the King', 198; Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal', 40–42; H. Hunger, *Antiker und Byzantinischer Roman* (Heidelberg, 1980), 24–5.

[64] Gregory of Nazianzos, *Θρῆνος περὶ τῶν τῆς αὐτοῦ ψυχῆς παθῶν*, *PG* 37, 1369–75. See also, Cox Miller, *Dreams*, 247–9.

narrative structure and the same verbal images. In Gregory's *enypnion*, two female figures appear to him whose beauty lies in the modesty (*aidōs*) that is all too obvious in their blank groundward gaze, and not in their finery and painted faces that are nevertheless described with an obsession matching anything in the novels. In Gregory's revisionist game, modesty becomes feminine 'being', while it is men who compel women to take on a feminine 'seeming' that corresponds only to male fantasies.[65] The sight provokes considerable pleasure in the author and he is glad to receive the kisses of the women on his mouth 'since they loved me as a friend'.[66] The two women introduce themselves as Chastity and Moderation, the companions of Christ, the nocturnal *illusion* proves to be demure, and the dream-like feeling equally as sweet as that savoured by Hysminias in his first erotic *enypnion*. The dream leads not to marriage but to celibacy, as the dreamer's desire is focused on the heavens and not on earthly matters. The difference between Gregory's dream and those of Hysminias, making due allowances for the literary genre to which each belongs, lies not in the imagery contained in the *enypnion* but in the divinely or earthly perspective this initiatory erotic dream places on the hero's development. In essence, this type of autobiography does not constitute a novelty, as it recycles a tradition in which the subject is not constituted as a psychological unity, as a personal story, but as social geography, composed, that is, of alternative social roles.

Twelfth-century romances reveal the shared concerns emerging in Komnenian society – a society in the process of discovering the adolescence of the aristocrat and contemplating how to manage it, and above all how to mould its gender identity. According to the views of the period, femininity was a natural state and had to obey the laws of restraint and modesty, while masculinity was a difficult period of learning. The Komnenian audience who commissioned and read these works sought answers to its own concerns. Each author approached the matter on different terms and, by means of a common love plot, produced various proposals. While for Prodromos love was a canvas on which war is shown to be a supremely male activity,[67] and for Eugenianos emphasis was placed, between other things, on the ability to manage discourse through a rhetorical treatment of love,[68] Makrembolites poses the schooling of the body in the 'management' of sexuality as the key problem.[69]

Despite their differences, the twelfth-century romances comprise a triptych that examines different aspects of male identity in its formative aspects, which

[65] Gregory of Nazianzos, verses 239–40.

[66] Gregory of Nazianzos, verse 254.

[67] On the Prodromos' philosophical background, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 270–276.

[68] On Eugenianos, see C. Jouanno, 'Nicétas Eugenianos, un héritier du roman grec', *REG* 102 (1989), 346–60.

[69] For a slightly different categorisation of the three romances, see Kaldellis, 'Historicism', 5.

in the Komnenian imagination constitutes a blend of soldier, compelling rhetorician and lover. The romances are part of what Paul Magdalino calls the 'unprecedented propaganda of imperial youth' of the Komnenian age[70] and constitute what Meunier describes as '*un cycle initiatique d'aventures à l'issue duquel* (the heroes) *d'adolescents qu'ils étaient, ils sont devenus adultes*'.[71] They uncover a new stage in the process of their maturation, not a new type of person.

If we compare those texts describing erotic dreams in the twelfth century (Manganeios Prodromos, Makrembolites) to those commenting on their effects (Zonaras, Theophylaktos of Ochrid,[72] et al.), we discern at this time a heightened interest in the physiological and psychological functions of the body. This interest can be likened to that of Late Antiquity, though under different circumstances. As Byzantium rediscovered some of the *bourgeois* insecurities of the Roman past, it renewed and adapted the tradition of the novel to its own reality.

Conclusions

The erotic dream in literature shapes, controls and disseminates social views on eroticism and sexuality. If we compare erotic dreams in hagiography with those in literature, differences both in rank and perspective are apparent.

As far as rank is concerned, erotic dreams in hagiography – at least those rated 'significant' enough to be made the object of narration – do not constitute dreams in the strict sense of the term, as they involve demonic intervention, while novelistic dreams with explicit sexual content are classic examples of *enypnia*, as defined by oneirocritical theory.

As regards perspective, while the erotic dream in hagiography is expressed and treated as a threat to the structure of the hero's heavenward-reaching subjectivity, erotic dreams in the romance are presented as internal processes that play a part in forming a new subjectivity whose purpose is the management of honourable social life through the socialization of adolescence.

The vertical hagiographical reading of masculinity, which excludes all forms of sexuality, is replaced by a horizontal literary reading that prefers examples of a socialized sexuality. Finally, each kind of narrative determines distinct dream geography. The temptation dream may occur during the night, the preferred time for demonic intervention, but also at high noon[73] when the light becomes just as threatening as the dark. In monastic narratives, time is reorganized with man

[70] Magdalino, 'Eros the King', 203.

[71] Meunier, *Roman et société*, 330, 332–3; Meunier, *Le roman byzantin*, 125–6.

[72] *Théophylacte d'Achrida, Discours, traités, poésies*, ed. P. Gautier (Thessaloniki, 1980), 329.9–15.

[73] Examples and discussion on the subject can be found in Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 226.

and his activities as the reference point and the day is divided into times when consciousness is controlled and times when this control is lost. The peak hours of light and dark constitute site of quotidian danger. On the other hand, dreamtime in the romances is a reconciled version of night that becomes a refuge and a privileged *topos* where the self is reconstructed as a virtual social protagonist.[74]

Beyond the obvious differences, the crucial question remains whether the erotic dreams in hagiography and the Komnenian romance[75] depict two different types of subject that coexist and whose difference is socially legitimized, or two types that are mutually exclusive at any single time and mutually successive diachronically.

Both types of narrative – hagiography and the romance – create social myths, aspire to an ideal and portray a utopia. Examples of literary escapism, they express an imaginary world that recreates reality by promoting ideal human types.[76] The body, gender and sexuality are all involved in this creation of the ideal self. The end result may differ, the self under construction may evolve in conflict or in harmony with society, yet the material and the notions that constitute it are shared. The body is constructed under strict surveillance as male or female, realistically in the case of the romance, or metaphorically in hagiography. Notions of gender are built on oppositions. Depending on the gender of the protagonist in the story, the opposite sex is perceived as threatening, the woman being the obvious victim as she epitomizes every kind of male fear on a personal or social level. Sexuality is conceived as a threat; it is defined as an expression of inequality; it becomes part of the rhetoric of social violence, distilling it and setting it up as an example: it is a violence to which the subject must be exposed. And the response by the protagonist will reflect the saintly/secular divide. The saint develops greater violence to quash sexuality at its root, while the hero of the novel transforms it into an acceptable and legitimized form of erotic coercion within the bounds of social rules. In both of these cases, erotic dreams reveal the same 'imagining' hovering undecided between sexual attraction and repulsion, between saintliness and an 'honourable' life.

---

[74] On the narrative function of the night in Makrembolites, see Nilsson, 'Spatial Time', 103.

[75] In the romances of the Palaiologan period, according to Agapitos, "Ἀπὸ τὸ "δρᾶμα"", 70: 'rhetorical discourse involving persuasion and resistance has been replaced by a dialogue encompassing convergence and consensus'. This change may be due to new reading trends, as Agapitos points out, that were becoming less public and increasingly private. The fact that Makrembolites is read differently by the author of *Livistros* reflects something of this change; cf. P. Agapitos, 'Dreams and Spatial Aesthetics of Narrative Presentation in *Livistros and Rhodamne*', *DOP* 53 (1999), 111–47.

[76] On the links between hagiography and romance, see I. Nilsson, 'Desire and God Have Always Been Around, in Life and Romance Alike', in I. Nilsson, *Plotting with Eros. Essays on the Poetics of Love and the Erotics of Reaiding* (Copenhagen, 2009), 235–60.

The accounts of erotic dreams in hagiography and the romance fulfil an obvious purpose: instruction, whether Christian[77] or erotic. It remains to discuss the question as to whether their underlying objective is to recycle a discourse bordering on pornography. Titillating images abound in the romances and the vitae, which were written for a demanding public; certain obsessions and insinuations feature in Saints' Lives intended for monks; and all this under the guise of appealing to saintliness, prudence and virtue. The danger, however, is clear. When a glance, an insinuation, a casual touch may be read as provocation in a sexually starved society, an erotic description, however innocent it may seem, may also stimulate thoughts and precipitate sexual arousal. This hazard has been noted and discussed. Basil Maleïnos (eleventh century), for example, advises confessors to avoid excessive concern with details when examining the sexual conduct of penitents, 'as they may provoke wanton thoughts and stimulate sexual arousal',[78] while Manuel Philes (fourteenth century) warns the readers of novels to refrain from solitary sexual activities.[79] Any answer to this question, then, must consider the writer's intentions, whether deliberate or not, as well as how each particular reader responds to the text. In other words, it must attempt to outline shadows, activating the imagination. But that is work for a novelist, not a historian.

[77] Angelidi, 'Αισθήσεις', 221.

[78] Basil Maleïnotes, ed. L. Petit, *Vie et office de Michel Maléinos suivis du traité ascétique de Basile le Maléinote* (Paris, 1903), 48.8–11.

[79] P. Odorico, 'Καλλίμαχος, Χρυσορρόη και ένας πολύ μοναχικός αναγνώστης', in E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys (eds), *Neograeca Medii Aevi V. Αναδρομικά και Προδρομικά. Approaches to Texts in Early Modern Greek* (Oxford, 2005), 271–86.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 12

Gender Ambiguity in Dreams of Conversion, Prophecy and Creativity

Barbara Tedlock

A number of anthropologists, historians and psychologists have observed that dreams reveal one's sense of self. The concept of a 'self' encompasses all aspects of subjectivity, identity and personhood. By continually updating our relationships within internal and external worlds, dreams offer us the nightly news of the self and in so doing help us to fashion models of ourselves. One excellent way to examine this process of self-fashioning is to focus on ambiguous metaphors, symbols and actions in dreams.

From the earliest times the sharing, interpreting and performing of dreams and visions has been of considerable interest to humankind. The imaginal world is located half-way between the external world of sensual knowing and the interior world of intuitive understanding. Whenever energy flows inward toward the spiritual and intellectual senses, rather than outward toward the worldly and perceptual senses, one enters an imaginal world. The images in this enchanted land, like those reflected in a mirror, are both there and not there.

If I gaze into a mirror, I see that I am in the mirror, but then I realize that I am also not in the mirror but outside the mirror. Rather than 'mirroring' the everyday face of ego-consciousness, dreams reflect a shadowy face of the Other within the self. This doubling of the self depends more on the metaphorical 'mirrors' found in psychic reality than on the literal mirrors found in physical reality. Our dream images are not symmetrical with our ego-consciousness, but reflect an otherness, foreign to our rational consciousness. This model of reflection reveals our shadow side that activates self-knowing. By moving from the objective to the subjective level of dream interpretation, alienated aspects of the psyche move into a more integrated relation to consciousness.

The interlacing of dreams and visions, with their many waking associations and interpretations, provide magical landscapes where humans create and communicate meanings that transcend cultural and historical differences. Dream communication also involves a convergence in the passing theories of individuals who embrace ad hoc strategies to make sense of particular utterances. As the philosopher Richard Rorty put it, 'a theory is "passing" because it must constantly be corrected to allow for mumbles, stumbles, malapropisms,

metaphors, tics, seizures, psychotic symptoms, egregious stupidity, strokes of genius, and the like'.[1]

Humans share sleeping dreams and waking visions either by means of representation – telling, describing and narrating – or by means of presentation – singing, dancing, masking, drawing, or painting. Dream-interpreters, prophets, psychoanalysts and ethnographers have long used a combination of these techniques to engage with the image-filled world of dreaming and visioning. Knowledge derived from dreams, visions, trances and other ecstatic experiences is central to spirituality, religion, psychology and cultural interpretation.

Women's Discourse

Historically women's discourse, or 'the female voice', has occurred worldwide mostly in private contexts in which ambiguity is a key expressive strategy linked to the illegitimacy, even immorality, of women's words. Recent studies, however, reveal how multifaceted the female voice can be. While some scholars assert that women's expression is an impoverished imitation of men's discourse, others celebrate the fact that the female voice can serve as a counter hegemonic contestation of the symbolic order.

British historian Patricia Crawford studied dream narratives found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English texts. The amount of dream sharing among women and the large number of dreambooks written for and read by women at that time suggests that dreams were of more interest and use to women than to men. Among Crawford's sources are several folios located in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. They consist of hand-written dreams inscribed during the 1690s by Anne Bathurst, a member of the mystical Philadelphia Society of London. These strongly gendered dream reports tell of the experience of lactation as a mystical fusion with the divine in which nurturer and nurtured join together as one.[2]

> The word divine multiplies in me & fills me, taking away my herts life into it. ... O, a fountain seal'd, breasts full of consolation. I am as pent milk in the breast, ready to be poured forth & dilated into Thee, from whom my fullness flows with such fullness and plentitude & pleas'd when eas'd.

---

[1] R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge, 1989), 14.

[2] P. Crawford, 'Women's Dreams in Early Modern England', in D. Pick and L. Roper (eds), *Dreams and History. The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis* (London, 2004), 93.

This dream is expressive of her bodily experience, which suggests that while women may share a cultural world with men they clearly embody and experience it differently.

To reveal more about feminine self-fashioning in dreams I turn to the work of Aneesa Kassam, a woman ethnographer of South Indian heritage who married into an indigenous Kenyan family. During her doctoral research among her husband's people, the Booran Oromo, she received an invitation to attend an important initiation ritual. During this ceremony, which occurs only once every eight years young men enter into an age-set, or fraternity, with which they remain closely connected for the rest of their lives. As they grow older, they move up through the ranks of leadership and attain elder status together with their wives. On the evening before the ceremony, Aneesa dreamed that she was attending the rituals with her husband who was at that time living in England:

> I was taking photographs of the events. As Gemetchu [her husband] and I moved through the ceremonial encampment, we came upon a gathering of people. In the center of this group was the newly appointed political leader (*abbaa gadaa*). He was making a speech to the crowd gathered around him. He was standing on a kind of ledge or platform. I could not hear what he was saying, but as I watched him, I felt I knew who he was. When he saw us, he asked the ritual experts to bring us into the center of the group. There, my husband was initiated into the new group of leaders. I watched proudly.
>
> When I awoke, I realized that the new *abbaa gadaa* was our friend, Abdullahi Jirma [the best man at their wedding], who had died in 1989.[3]

By the following morning, the ethnographic team had grown so large that the elders became worried and met to discuss the situation. Fearing the ethnographers might exploit the young men, the elders told them that they would either have to pay a large sum of money to photograph the ritual or leave the community immediately. Aneesa took responsibility for the situation, telling the elders that the primary objective was to learn about the ritual not to photograph the ceremony. She promised that the ethnographers would be willing to leave their cameras at home. Upon hearing this, the elders allowed them to remain at the encampment to observe the rituals but instructed them that if they wished to photograph they would need to negotiate with individuals.

The following day, during the initiation ritual, one of the officials suddenly pointed at Aneesa and summoned her to the centre of the enclosure. 'Although I was confused and did not understand what he was saying, I felt that a part of my

[3] A. Kassam, 'On Becoming an Oromo Anthropologist. Dream, Self and Ritual: Three Interpretations', *Anthropology of Consciousness* 10.2 (1999), 3.

dream was being re-enacted in waking reality. In this instance, however, it was I, and not Gemetchu, who was being called into the centre of the group'.[4]

Later, when she reported this dream to her spouse and an Oromo friend, they instructed her that the dream, like the ritual she attended, belonged to the realm of *uumaa*, or 'creation'. This sacred region, which encompasses both objective and subjective realities, contains everything that existed in the past, exists in the present and will ever exist in the future. Here all material and non-material phenomena are subject to the determining force of *ayyaana*, a combination of divine grace, generative power and the laws of temporal causality. It is by means of this grace and power that people and ancestors communicate intersubjectively through dreams.

Aneesa's friend further observed that the couple's ethnographic and spiritual quest for traditional knowledge and wisdom was 'good'. Because they were united in this goal their *ayyaana* had joined together and the appearance of their deceased friend (the best man at their wedding who shape-shifted into a ritual leader in her dream) was a sign of recognition and approval for the joint work they had undertaken. She closes with the observation that, 'Dreams are ethically important since they can serve as a means of transcending cultural differences and of expressing the universal similarism of the human condition'.[5]

Rather than mirroring back the everyday face of her own ego-consciousness, the dream reflected the shadowy face of the alien Other and her desire to join him as an elder in his age-set. By shifting from the objective to the subjective level of dream interpretation, alienated aspects of her psyche moved into a more integrated relation with her consciousness. The interlacing of her dream narrative with an African initiation ritual enabled her to imaginatively enter into her husband's culture.

Passing Theories of Dreaming

Like the Oromo of East Africa, Amerindians living in North America view life as a sacred path revealed within dreams, visions and other prophetic signs. These societies recognize a multiplicity of types of dreams and have numerous ad hoc passing theories of dreaming. Because dream classifications and theories express worldview, Amerindian dreams reflect not only the ecological and social context of dreaming but also the social, political and religious status of dreamers and dream interpreters. Theories of dreaming are never static, internally consistent sets of ideas disconnected from the thoughts and activities of everyday life. They

[4] Kassam, 'On Becoming an Oromo Anthropologist', 4.

[5] Kassam, 'On Becoming an Oromo Anthropologist', 9.

are ambiguously located within the natural and social worlds and interpreted in specific contexts.

Phenomenologically oriented ethnographers have observed that dreaming and waking realities are not fully compartmentalized worlds but rather overlapped experiences. The Watsons, during their fieldwork among the Guajiro in Venezuela discovered that dreaming is a reality in all senses, not only depicting or foretelling events that may occur in the future, but also commenting on the dreamer's self including the person's current physical and spiritual status.[6]

The Anishnaabe (Ojibwa and Cree) of the Great Lakes region of Canada and the US, like the Guajiro, describe dreaming as a form of self-experience. They do not conceptualize separate or parallel dreaming and waking worlds, but rather a unified spatial-temporal frame of reference for all self-related experience. Thus, a man who dreamed that a rock opened and he pulled his canoe inside said that later when he was out hunting he recognized the rock in the physical world.[7]

For Native Americans living in the plains of North America, dreams are important extra-psychic events, occurring simultaneously on various interlocking planes of reality in both sacred and linear time as well as in spiritual and physical geography. In these cultures, there are formal rituals known in Lakota as hambleyapi, or 'crying for a vision', during which people at important life transitions seek communication with supernaturals through a combination of waking visions and sleeping dreams.[8] It is by means of these dream-calling rituals that the Lakota have persisted as a vibrant people well into the twenty-first century.

Ritual attention to dreaming encourages Lakotas to act upon their dreams. In the 1990s a Lakota woman living in South Dakota dreamt of a deity known as Double Woman:[9]

> In my dream, I got another boss. Then she started doing things out of the way, so I decided I better resign, because this is a telltale sign. I had nightmares that this postal inspector was standing over me with her twisted ugly face and I was lying on the floor and she was threatening me.

---

[6] L.C. Watson and M.-B. Watson-Franke, 'Spirits, Dreams, and the Resolution of Conflict among Urban Guajiro Women', *Ethos* 5 (1977), 388–408; L.C. Watson, 'Dreaming as Worldview and Action in Guajiro culture', *Journal of Latin American Lore* 78.2 (1981), 239–54.

[7] A.I. Hallowell, 'The Role of Dreams in Ojibwa Culture', in G.E. von Grunebaum and R. Caillois (eds), *The Dream and Human Societies* (Berkeley, 1966), 267–92.

[8] J.E. Brown, *The Sacred Pipe. Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman, 1953); L. Irwin, 'Sending a Voice, Seeking a Place. Visionary Traditions among Native Women of the Plains', in K. Bulkeley (ed.), *Dreams* (New York, 2001), 93–110.

[9] K.A. Pickering, *Lakota Culture, World Economy* (Lincoln, 2000), 26.

Upon awakening, she realized that the female postal inspector was a manifestation of the deity Anukite, 'Double Woman' or 'Two-Faced Woman', and quit her job to take up bead-making. She undertook this career change knowing she would be successful since Double Woman excels in crafts including inscribing petroglyphs on stone, tanning buffalo hides and doing quill and beadwork.[10] She was worried though, due to the ambiguity and dangerousness of Double Woman who can cause a person 'to lose herself and her mind' if she lets herself be influenced by the wrong face.[11]

Double Woman is all about oppositions: youth and age, beauty and ugliness, hard work and laziness, good and evil. Double Woman dreaming allows a young woman, or less often a young man, free choice in terms of both occupational and gender-roles. Some dreamers imitate the evil side of Double Woman, wandering about talking loudly and laughing raucously. Her face signifies ambiguity and ambivalence: she can turn herself into a man and make some women not just attractive, but excessively sexual, and others not just efficient, but compulsively hard working.[12]

When Double Woman appears in a vision and offers a man both masculine and feminine tools – bows and arrows or weaving sticks – if that man chooses the feminine tools, he undergoes a change in gender, acquiring the respected Lakota status of *winkte*, 'man-woman'. Early in the colonial period this gender status was erroneously labelled a *berdache*, from an Arabic term meaning 'male prostitute'. This highly secular and dismissive attitude has little in common with the sacred status of a *winkte*. As the Holy Man, Lame Deer, explained 'To us a man is what nature, or his dreams, make him. We accept him for what he wants to be. That's up to him'.[13]

In Lakota culture another important dream deity is Thunder. This deity is many but only one, moves counter-sunwise instead of sunwise, is shapeless but has wings, lacks feet but has talons and is headless but has a huge beak; its voice is a thunderclap and the glance of its eye is a lightning bolt. A person who has experienced a vision or dream of Thunder promises to work for him on earth as a Heyoka, or sacred clown. Until the dreamer fulfils the promise Thunder 'wears' the dreamer, as a medicine person wears an object or a symbol of an object that is subject to his command.

---

[10] L. Sundstrom, 'Steel Awls for Stone Age Plainswomen. Rock Art, Religion and the Hide Trade on the Northern Plains', *Plains Anthropologist* 47 (2002), 99–119.

[11] S. Young Bear and R.D. Theisz, *Standing in the Light. A Lakota Way of Seeking* (Norman, 1994), 25.

[12] J. Mirsky, 'The Dakota', in M. Mead (ed.), *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive People* (New York, 1937), 415.

[13] S. Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men. Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* (Austin, 1998), 312.

Thunder dreamers take up contrary actions such as riding backwards on a horse wearing their boots backwards, appearing to be coming and going at the same time. These actions, while they expose the dreamer to public ridicule, have important spiritual meaning. Heyokas reveal another reality a non-objective, shapeless, unnatural world of pure energy and immense power. The contrary actions not only demonstrate the unnatural, anti-sunwise nature of Thunder but they open people to important ideas and experiences. As the Lakota Holy Man, Lame Deer expressed it, 'Fooling around, a clown is really performing a spiritual ceremony'.[14]

Another Lakota Holy Man, Black Elk, explained the Heyoka's social role by saying: 'You have noticed that the truth comes into this world with two faces. One is sad with suffering, and the other laughs; but it is the same face, laughing and weeping. When people are already in despair, maybe the laughing face is better for them; and when they feel too good and are too sure of being safe, maybe the weeping face is better for them to see'.[15]

Gender Identity

Indigenous theories of dreaming productively play with gender identity. While gender encompasses the cultural meaning given to one's biological sex, gender identity reflects one's subjectively felt experience of being masculine, feminine or ambivalent. The public expression of gender identity creates and confirms the gender role a person assumes in society. Since dreams may encourage changes in behaviour, including shifting or combining of gender identities, it is important to pay attention to gender as well as sex when discussing dreaming. The visionary powers of dreams sanctioned switching gender identity and roles. Among the Blackfeet, this resulted in the social category of 'Manly-Hearted Women' who modelled their lives on male behaviour – taking up the social role of warrior and provider, and marrying another woman.[16]

The ancient historical record provides us with a North African woman visionary by the name of Vibia Perpetua, who if she had been Lakota might have been a Double Woman dreamer. In North Africa in the year 203 AD, Roman authorities in Africa arrested six Christian converts including this 22-year-old Carthaginian. While she was in prison awaiting death by contest with beasts in the gladiatorial arena, she kept a diary describing four dream-visions as well as the everyday conditions of prison life including her own and her companion Felicitas'

[14] Lame Deer and R. Erdoes, *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* (New York, 1972), 236.

[15] J.G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (Lincoln, 1932), 159–60.

[16] O. Lewis, 'Manly-Hearted Women among the North Piegan', *American Anthropologist* 43 (1941), 173–87.

bodily experiences of motherhood, parturition and lactation.[17] This remarkable diary together with a dream report from a male prisoner by the name of Saturus was sewn together with editorial comment by an anonymous author.

While we know nothing concerning Perpetua's childhood, there is evidence that she may have exerted a leadership role in the New Prophecy movement known as 'Montanism'.[18] This heretical sect, founded in Asia Minor about 156 CE, held that the Holy Spirit appeared to Montanus who prophesied that Christ's second coming was imminent. The movement reached its culmination in third-century Carthage where the Roman theologian Tertullian not only supported it but he may also be the anonymous author of the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*.[19] Followers of Montanism did not flee persecution but sought it. This provides a partial motivation for Perpetua's embrace of persecution and even death. Another influence may have been novels with adolescent female heroes that appeared for the first time in the third century. Although there is no direct evidence that she in fact read these melodramatic texts, since she was educated and literate in Latin, they may well have provided her with appropriate models for her own heroic quest.[20]

Early in her arrest Perpetua confronted her father telling him she was a Christian and reported that, 'he moved towards me as though he would pluck my eyes out'. She spoke to her mother about the infant she was nursing and gave the child to her but later received permission for it to stay with her in prison so she could continue nursing (3.6–7). Her brother then requested her to 'ask for a vision to discover whether you are to be condemned or freed'. She did so and reported the following dream-vision:

> I saw a ladder of tremendous height made of bonze, reaching all the way to the heavens, but it was so narrow that only one person could climb up at a time. To the sides of the ladder were attached all sorts of metal weapons: there were swords, spears, hooks, daggers, and spikes; so that if anyone dried to climb up carelessly or without paying attention, he would be mangled and his flesh would adhere to the weapons.

---

[17] H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs. Texts and Translations* (Oxford, 1972), 106–31; P. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages. A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge, 1984), 2–4.

[18] T.D. Barnes, *Tertullian. A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford, 1971); W. Tabbernee, 'Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry in Carthage c. 203 C.E.', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32.4 (2005), 421–42.

[19] R.D. Butler, *The New Prophecy and 'New Visions'. Evidence of Montanism in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (Washington, DC, 2006).

[20] J.E. Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion. The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York, 1997).

> At the foot of the ladder lay a dragon of enormous size, and it would attack those who tried to climb up and try to terrify them from doing so. And Saturus was the first to go up, he who was later to give himself up of his own accord. He had been the builder of our strength, although he was not present when were arrested. And he arrived at the top of the staircase and he looked back and said to me: 'Perpetua, I am waiting for you. But take care; do not let the dragon bite you'.
>
> 'He will not harm me', I said, 'in the name of Christ Jesus'.
>
> Slowly, as though he were afraid of me, the dragon stuck his head out from underneath the ladder. Then, using it as my first step, I trod on his head and went up.
>
> Then I saw an immense garden, and in it a gray-haired man sat in shepherd's garb; tall he was, and milking sheep. And standing around him were many thousands of people clad in white garments. He raised his head, looked at me, and said: 'I am glad you have come, my child'.
>
> He called me over to him and gave me, as it were, a mouthful of the milk he was drawing; and I took it into my cupped hands and consumed it. And all those who stood around said: 'Amen!' At the sound of this word I came to, with the taste of something sweet still in my mouth. I at once told this to my brother, and we realized that we would have to suffer, and that from now on we would no longer have any hope in this life.

Following this vision and another confrontation with her father, Perpetua was miraculously relieved of her responsibilities as a mother. She states 'as God willed, the baby wanted no more of the breast, nor did they give me fever, so that I was not tormented by care for the baby or the pain in my breast' (6.8). She then tells the dramatic tale of Felicitas' giving birth while in prison to a premature baby girl.

Patricia Cox Miller analysed these remarkable texts as expressions of female desire that worked against patriarchal definitions of woman.[21] She noted that in Late Antiquity, dreams provided a discourse of 'otherness', expressing a consciousness different from everyday waking life. She followed Lyotard[22] in describing Perpetua's dream-visions as 'postmodern', in that the identity of the dreamer as a self-consistent presence is shattered and reformulated in opposition to the dominant structure of meaning that produces stable understandings of self-identity. Perpetua's dream-speech becomes a type of hieroglyphic language that discloses 'other' dimensions of both time and the self.[23]

---

[21] P. Cox Miller, 'The Devil's Gateway. An Eros of Difference in the Dreams of Perpetua', *Dreaming* 2 (1992), 45–63.

[22] J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, (Minneapolis, 1984).

[23] P. Cox Miller, 'Re-Imaging the Self in Dreams', *Continuum* 1 (1991), 35–53.

Following Julia Kristeva,[24] this dream-vision might also be analysed as a form of 'carnivalesque discourse', a subversive, even rebellious, visionary poetic logic that transgresses rules of everyday language and social morality. In the course of her trial Perpetua gives up her name. She says, 'I am a Christian/I am Christiana'. Her taking on of a new name 'Christiana' removes the family identity given to her by her father and the dominant society. Other martyrs have also denied both their kinship and community relations by flaunting their name changes.[25]

Even before sentencing, Perpetua knew she was going to die since she had a dream-vision in which she went into the amphitheatre where enormous crowds were waiting to see her fight with a ferocious Egyptian athlete. 'My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man', she said. Here in a key gender-bending image she assumes a man's body to fight the Egyptian male athlete who she wrestled with until she got him into a headlock and won the fight. 'Then I awoke; I realized that it was not with wild animals that I would fight, but with the devil; but I knew that I would win the victory'. And, of course in her eyes she did.

Sex and Gender Differences in Dreams

In the early 1960s the psychologist Calvin Hall and his associates examined the manifest content of dreams they gathered in the United States. With an innocence of sex-and-gender theories they asserted that there was 'a ubiquitous sex difference in dreams'.[26] Hall's followers later amplified this with an even more extravagant claim that 'anatomy is destiny, for the single most important factor in determining dream themes is the sex into which one is born'.[27]

In attempting to explain what he thought was a sexual difference in dreaming, Hall proposed that since the frequency of an 'image' or a 'theme' is a measure of the strength of a dreamer's preoccupation with it, male characters point to men as either a source of pleasure or of conflict.[28] To back up this assertion he turned to Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex in which the father is theorized as an intruder in the loving relationship with the mother.[29] Relying primarily upon material from

---

[24] J. Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in T. Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader* (New York, 1986), 34–61.

[25] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 108, 114.

[26] C. Hall and B. Domhoff, 'A Ubiquitous Sex Difference in Dreams', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 9 (1963), 259–67.

[27] C. Winget, M. Kramer and R. Whitman, 'The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status and Race to Dream Content', *Psychophysiology* 7 (1972), 325–6.

[28] C. Hall, 'Strangers in Dreams. An Empirical Confirmation of the Oedipus Complex', *Journal of Personality* 31 (1963), 278–80.

[29] S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vols 4–5, trans. J. Strachey (London, 1900).

his own dreams and on anthropological studies of totemism, Freud developed the Oedipus complex as an explanation of the formation of the superego. According to this theory, male children come-of-age psychologically at about the age of five by selecting their mothers as love objects. This arouses the father's anger, resulting in a fear of castration in the male child, which in turn creates the child's superego.

Most researchers, however, remain unconvinced by the Freudian conflict theory of superego development, and instead suggest that the frequency of physical and verbal aggression in dreams depends on social constellations and culturally emergent symbols that vary widely according to historical and social contexts. Thus, in a study among the Kiganda of East Africa two ethnographers reported that male characters tended to predominate and display more aggression than females in the dreams of both sexes. They argued that this reflected the patriarchal focus in the society and theorized that a comparative West African study of dreams might produce a different outcome.[30] They expected that since women in West Africa are the main economic providers in market activities, aggressive interactions between females rather than between males would be evident in their dreams. In a more recent follow-up study researchers partly confirmed this theory when they found as much physical aggression and even more verbal aggression in women's dreams than in men's.[31]

In a comparative study between the dreams of Zapotec Indians living in Oaxaca Mexico and Hall's sample of standard American dreams researchers found that males in both groups reported more aggression in their dreams than did females. This dream aggression, however, was far more physical than verbal among the Zapotecs than among North Americans.[32] In a North Indian study, the numbers of male and female dream characters differed significantly from the US data due to greater sexual segregation of men and women in India. They argued that a phenomenological-cultural theory worked better than a Freudian psychoanalytic theory because sleep images and thoughts directly relate 'to the concerns and experiences of the previous day, refracted through the prism of one's personality orientation'.[33]

Instead, I suggest that since male-centred social organizations are predicated on the patriarchal exchange of women by men in marriage, both girls and boys are encouraged to affirm their selfhood by making themselves objects of dominating adult men's attentions and desires. By emphasizing the damage done to both

[30] M.C. Robbins and P.L. Kilbride, 'Sex Differences in Dreams in Uganda', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2 (1971), 406–8.

[31] R.I. Monroe, R.G. Monroe, A. Brasher, T. Severin, D. Schweickart and R. Moore, 'Sex Differences in East African Dreams', *Journal of Social Psychology* 125 (1985), 405–6.

[32] C.W. O'Nell and N.D. O'Nell, 'A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Aggression in Dreams: Zapotecs and Americans', *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 23 (1977), 39–40.

[33] A. Grey and D. Kalsched, 'Oedipus East and West. An Exploration via Manifest Dream Content', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 2 (1971), 337–52.

sexes through elder men's social dominance, clinicians have begun to identify the factors that must be taken into account to bring about healing psychological and social change.[34]

Otto Rank, who coined the term 'pre-Oedipal,' theorized that it was not the father but rather the powerful mother who was the source of the superego. This idea catapulted him out of the Freudian inner circle and led to the development of object-relations therapy.[35] Melanie Klein, who helped to found the object-relations school of psychoanalysis, believed that the oedipal complex begins in the first year of a child's life with the destruction of an object resulting in the loss of the child's nurturing environment. From this emerges the melancholic child filled with loss and guilt.[36] Desire for Freud arose with the attempts to fill emptiness, while for Klein it arose with the guilty knowledge of responsibility: the object is not lost but ruined. Followers of Klein focus on the damage done to boys by flight into male-centred idealizations of themselves, or others, as the phallus.[37]

Julia Kristeva advocates analysing the factors involved in seeking to escape infantile immersion in the mother. She suggests that the intense likes and dislikes of young women for their caregivers and schoolteachers are due to the low status accorded women in most societies.[38] There is evidence that these negative feelings expressed towards female authority figures contribute to young women's eating disorders including anorexic and bulimic attacks which are often motivated by the wish not to become physically the same as their oppressed and oppressive mothers.[39]

Janet Sayers, who investigated American teenagers' dreams, found that both sexes tell male-centred dreams of themselves or others as heroes and saviours. The precursor dreams of boys are of detachment and isolation while those of girls are of attachment and closeness. One little girl recalled a recurring dream of catching her finger in the brakes of her bicycle, her fingernail rips off and her mother bandages it, then drives her to the hospital. Another little girl reported a dream of turning into a teddy bear that a child was cuddling.[40]

---

[34] J. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London, 1974); N. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering. Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, 1978); J. Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love. Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (London, 1988).

[35] O. Rank, *Psychology and the Soul*, trans. W.D. Turner (Philadelphia, 1950).

[36] M. Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation, and Other Works 1921–1945* (London, 1988).

[37] D. Birksted-Breen, 'Phallus, Penis and Mental Space', *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 77.4 (1996), 649–57.

[38] J. Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. R. Guberman (New York, 1995).

[39] S. Phillips, *Beyond the Myths. Mother-Daughter Relationships in Psychology, History, Literature, and Everyday Life* (London, 1996).

[40] J. Sayers, 'Teenage Dreams. Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Adolescence', *Signs* 25.3 (2000), 826.

Conclusions

Girls and boys together with women and men, in many places and times, both share and segment their social and cultural worlds. They have similar and different experiences and engage in similar and different acts of embodiment. The self-fashioning work of dreaming sheds light on the discourses of gendered identity and gender-bending. Researchers and popularizers who practice statistical analysis of the manifest content of dreams in pursuit of 'the ubiquitous sex difference' are unknowingly, perhaps, working within the hegemonic heterosexist bias of Western culture in which anatomy is destiny. Historical and ethnographic evidence directly questions, even contradicts, their assumptions. Native Americans, with their ambiguous interpretations of dreaming and sexuality have long allowed for, and even celebrated, gender freedom of choice.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 13
Psychoanalysis and Byzantine *Oneirographia*

Catia Galatariotou

Like any other branch of Psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic thinking about dreams is constantly evolving. Its basis however remains Freud's work; so I will introduce this chapter with a few, very pared down reminders of Freud's theory of dreams.[1]

In Freud's topographical model of the mind, a wish has to journey through layers of the unconscious and the preconscious before it becomes conscious. An internal censor judges whether its becoming conscious will cause intense, potentially unbearable psychic pain, and if so it will try to repress it. Offensive material will only emerge into consciousness in a disguised form, having undergone changes to make it more acceptable, and so the resulting conscious thought is a compromise between censorship and the wish seeking gratification through conscious expression. A dream is a prime example of such a compromise formation. Behind its *manifest content* – the dream as remembered upon waking up – lays hidden the *latent content* of the original dream thoughts. The *dream work* required for transforming latent into manifest content includes the use of *condensation* of multiple associations into one representation; the *displacement* of psychical intensity from one idea onto another; *symbolization*; and often *revision*, which gives the manifest dream a facade of intelligibility, and a possible *secondary revision* which occurs near the waking state or upon recounting the dream and furnishes the material with logic, coherence, causality, temporal sequentiality.

The aim of Freudian dream interpretation is 'to replace the [manifest] dream with the latent dream thoughts, to unravel what the dream-work has woven'. And the Ariadne's thread in this backward journey from the conscious into the unconscious is the process of *free association*. This requires of the dreamer to

[1] Contained basically in S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, 1900, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London, 1953), vols 4 and 5; condensed exposition in *On Dreams*, ibid., vol. 5, 631–86. For modern psychoanalytic ideas on dreams see E. Freeman Sharpe, *Dream Analysis* (London, 1937); S. Flanders (ed.), *The Dream Discourse Today* (London, 1993); R.J. Pearlberg (ed.), *Dreaming and Thinking* (London, 2000). See also D. Pick and L. Roper, *Dreams and History. The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis* (London and New York, 2004).

suspend those internalized 'dams of civilization', as Freud called them – shame, disgust, morality – which caused the dream work to occur in the first place, and to say 'whatever occurs to his mind without exception'. If the dreamer does this, then what comes up is a mass of apparently disparate material but which in fact leads back to the latent dream content – or rather 'contents', for all dreams contain more than one layer of meaning; and indeed some of the dream's secrets may never be completely understood: there is 'often [...] a tangle of dream thoughts which can not be unravelled [...]; this is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown'.

Dreams represent above all the disguised 'fulfilment of a wish [...] no matter what else they may contain'. The one exception to this rule concerns anxiety dreams, in which dream-work fails and insufficient disguise of latent thoughts allows too much anxiety to break through, interrupting sleep.

Now, can psychoanalytic thinking about dreams further our understanding of historical dreams? (By which we mean perforce *written* descriptions of dreams, as emphasized by the term *oneirographia*).[2] As we all know, the marriage of History and Psychoanalysis has not always exactly prospered. I will give you the Bad News first in the shape of a short list of problem areas or points of tension in this marriage.

First, superficial or dogmatic application of psychoanalytic thinking can distort both historical truth and psychic truth; so one must be prepared to acquire sufficient knowledge of both subjects before attempting such a match-making.

Second, psychoanalysis is a dynamic, interactive process, which involves two persons, alone in a room and concurrently alive. This impacts directly on dream interpretation as analyst and analysand, working in the real (external) and transferential context of their knowing of each other, crucially need the dreamer's free associations to the dream. Without them, even the most apparently obvious symbol cannot be understood – for, in contrast to the popular dreambook understanding, the psychoanalytic interpretation of any symbol is totally contingent on the dreamer's unconscious personal usage in that particular dream. Therefore, the modern reader trying to approach a historical dream at the personal level must be aware that he or she will be replacing the dreamer's associations with the reader's own.

Third, historians have been known to exhibit a tendency to equate a given past society's *oneirographia* with what was actually generally dreamt by its people, and thereupon to draw conclusions regarding their psychic inner world. In one example, a commentator on a survey of some seventeenth-century Englishmen's dreams observes that 'their manifest content concerned public life

[2] I distinguish *oneirographia* – the written description of dreams – from *oneirologia* (oneirology), which refers to the theoretical discussion of dreams and dreaming.

and religion, not sex, suggesting that early modern people's psychic lives were driven by very different forces than those of the Freudian epoch'.[3] Is this really so? Is it not the case, rather, that seventeenth-century Englishmen wrote only those dreams which was culturally permissible for them to write? To assume that historical *oneirographia* is representative of what people actually generally dreamt is mistaken synecdochic thinking: in fact the various conscious and unconscious censors encoded in cultural restrictions mitigate for the precisely opposite conclusion, especially with regard to pre-modern cultures. So it may be, as Burke says, that within 'a given culture people tend to dream particular kinds of dreams';[4] but the Byzantine *oneirographia* allows us to draw conclusions regarding what dreams the Byzantines tended to record, not what dreams they tended to dream.

Fourth. Rather sweepingly, Freud described dreams in literature as 'dreams that have never been dreamt at all'.[5] Similarly, when Byzantinists recognize a dream as a *topos*, the near automatic assumption is that it is has not been dreamt but is an invented dream, a literary device. Yet from a psychological point of view the fact that a recorded dream is a *topos*, a cliché, does not preclude the possibility that it really was dreamt. Just think of anxiety dreams, for instance: the dream in which you are in an exam room to realize that your mind is as blank as the sheet of paper before you; or, the one when you try to scream to save your life but can't; or, you are persecuted and realize that you have no escape route; or you suddenly realize that you are naked in the midst of a crowd ... Such anxiety dreams are *topoi* in a modern psychoanalytic practice, but when a patient brings such a dream I don't tell him or her that this is insignificant and devoid of emotionality because it is a cliché, for it is certainly not so to the dreamer! In short, a conventional expression is not necessarily a false one; in fact, in a culture as prescriptive in its expressions as Byzantine culture appears to have been, you would perhaps rather expect the manifest dream itself, let alone its recording, to be cast in a culturally conventional form.

And there is a further twist in all this. The fact that so much of Byzantine *oneirographia* is dream-fulfilling (prophesy retrospectively recorded, instruction after it had taken, post-factum legitimization) may mislead the modern reader into assuming that its literary functional usage precludes the possible reality and emotionality of the recorded dream. Yet considering the Freudian dream's wish-fulfilling function, within the context of Byzantine culture, is there any earthly reason why a general would not dream of victory on the eve of battle?

---

[3] Pick and Roper, *Dreams*, 18, commenting on P. Burke, 'L'histoire sociale des rêves', *Annales ESC* 28 (1973), 329–42.

[4] P. Burke, 'The Cultural History of Dreams', in P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1997), 25.

[5] S. Freud, 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva', in S. Freud, *Psychological Writings and Letters*, ed. S.L. Gilman (New York, 1995), 193.

Why a mother would not dream her precocious, darling little boy grow up to be a saint, a general, an emperor even? And would she not have kept quiet about it until he grew up to (inadvertently) fulfil the dream? I wonder rather how many Byzantine mothers did not have such dreams which, subsequently unfulfilled, were deemed 'insignificant' and were quietly forgotten and certainly not recorded.

I am not trying to argue here that all Byzantine *topoi* dreams were truly dreamt; far from it. I am rather putting a plea for a measure of doubt, leaving open the possibility that more or less any given Byzantine recorded dream may or may not have been dreamt. Merely to think this, and to stay with the doubt, opens one's possibilities in the encounter with the Byzantine mind. The task of the analyst, Ricoeur wrote, is to hold concurrently 'the willingness to suspect, the willingness to listen'.[6] The student of Byzantine *oneirographia* might do well to take up the same challenge.

My short list of problem areas over, time now for some Good News. I think that psychoanalysis does have something to offer to the furthering of our understanding of the Byzantine dream and its creator, the Byzantine sleeper. It is true that for the most part Byzantine dreams are hearsay dreams, not the *oneirographos*' own but another's; and that they were written within a very specific context, with very specific, tightly prescribed structures, functions and aims, as the work of George Calofonos amongst others shows so clearly.[7] Psychoanalysis can offer something in the encounter with this mass of the *oneirographic corpus*. For instance, it can stimulate ideas about recurrent symbols in dreams, about their latent meaning and how and when and why they change, if they do, through Byzantine history. But mostly and rightly nowadays Byzantinists tend to split their focus between the dream and the *oneirographos*: why did he choose to write this dream down, at that particular point in time, in that specific part of his narrative, what audience did he have in mind, what point was he pursuing? This approach addresses principally the historical-cultural level, but in its focus on the *oneirographos* it potentially opens a doorway to the individual *oneirographos* himself. This is music to my ears, for the focus of interest of the psychoanalyst is precisely this individual *oneirographos*, and all the more so when the *oneirographos* is also the dreamer.

---

[6] P. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, 1970), 27.

[7] For example G.[T.] Calofonos, *Byzantine Oneiromancy* (M.Phil.; University of Birmingham, 1994); also his, 'Dreaming the End of Time: Eschatology and Propaganda in Sixth-Century Historiography' (unpublished paper given at the AHRB Day School, *Dreams, Visions and Phantasia: Medieval Perspectives*, Queen's University, Belfast, 2002); and his, 'Dream Narratives in Historical Writing. Making Sense of History in Theophanes Chronographia', in R. Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Farnham, 2010), 133–43.

In his or her psychological make-up, cross-culturally and diachronically, this individual will be the dynamic outcome of complex interactions between universal and personal innate dispositions, immediate familial influences, and those of the wider cultural stage on which he or she exists. In a real dream you would expect to find that the very personal would also contain and refer, if only implicitly, both to the collective cultural level in which the individual is embedded, and to aspects of a universal level. The latter is always contingent on what affects viscerally all human beings: birth, and death; the body, and the mind or the soul; the innate and experiential knowledge of primitive anxiety, of sexual desire and the necessity to relate to external and internal objects.

Would you expect to find traces of such a complex picture in Byzantine *oneirographia*? Has anything substantial and truly personal survived after the multitude of censors, personal and cultural, unconscious and very conscious indeed, had done their work behind the Byzantine dream's written manifest content? Or is it the case that all Byzantine *oneirographia* gives us is but alleged dreams of alleged dreamers? After all, the idea of a dreamer writing down a dream for his and the dream's sake alone is a modern phenomenon and, you might have thought, absent from Byzantium. And yet, there are exceptions, and they are truly fascinating. I propose to look into one of them, with the proviso, always, that what follows is a hypothesis.

Fittingly and significantly, my dream comes from a period in which individualism raised its head above the Byzantine cultural parapet. I say 'dream' but in fact what I will focus on is a small but perfectly formed collection of dreams: the *oneirographia* in Michael Psellos' *Funeral Oration for his Mother*.[8] I am grateful to Christine Angelidi for her recent excellent paper, which brought the text vividly back to my mind and stimulated my thoughts.[9] The text has attracted a number of commentators, and I am sorry that because of limitations of space I will not engage here with their contributions; but I want to point out at least that because of the dream's multiple layers of signification my views or interpretations do not necessarily exclude other, different views.[10]

The *Oration*'s *oneirographia* consists of five dreams. As a practising analyst, when a patient brings me a number of dreams dreamt in one night or over a few

[8] Ed. U. Criscuolo, *Michele Psello. Autobiografia: Encomio per la madre. Testo critico, introduzione e commentario* (Naples, 1989) (hereafter: *Enc. in mat*.)

[9] C. Angelidi, 'The Writing of Dreams: A Note on Psellos' Funeral Oration for his Mother', in C. Barber and D. Jenkins (eds), *Reading Michael Psellos* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 153–66. I am following Angelidi's translation throughout.

[10] See Angelidi, 'The Writing of Dreams'; Criscuolo in *Enc. in mat*.; J. Walker, 'These Things I have not Betrayed: Michael Psellos' Encomium of his Mother as a Defence of Rhetoric', *Rhetorica* 22 (2004), 49–101, especially 77–8, 86–7, 91–3; H.E. Del Medico, 'Ein Ödipuskomplex im elften Jahrhundert. Michael Psellos', *Imago* 38 (1932), 204–36, esp. 226 n. 1.

consecutive nights, we will typically work on each dream individually, but will also consider all the dreams together as possibly forming another, larger dream unit. Looked at in this way, the *Oration*'s five dreams emerge indeed as composite parts of a larger dream unit. This dream unit is possessed of an internal structure and forms a coherent, sequential narrative which charts out crucial landmarks in Michael's psycho-developmental history and speaks of the way the direction it took affected his internal relationship with his primary objects – his parents. The dreams are spread out in the text, forming one interrupted sequential narrative – a bit like a series on the television, its episodes interrupted by real life, as it were, to be continued later. The story they tell through the larger dream unit is simply and elegantly composed of two pairs of dreams, each on either side of a crucial middle one. I disagree with the view that all these dreams are invented; in my understanding, from the start they lay claim to have been actually dreamt, and this claim gets stronger as the dream unit unfolds.

The first two are hearsay dreams.[11] They were dreamt by the author's mother, Theodote, against the background of eight-year old Michael wanting to continue his education; the father opposing this; the mother being undecided until the dreams tip the balance and lead to her crucial decision to support Michael. In the first dream a holy man (John Chrysostom, she thought) promises Theodote to take personal care of her son's education; but the decision-clincher for Theodote is the second dream in which the Virgin herself instructs the continuation of Michael's education. There is a subtle hint there of Theodote's anxiety regarding the secular dangers involved in such a decision, an anxiety addressed and put to rest with great economy by the Virgin's words: 'Fill him with literature; you know he worships me', which I would interpret as meaning, 'Fill him with literature *because* you know he worships me' – the dropping of the causal link ('because') in the dream being one of the characteristics of dream work, as Freud was to note some 800 years later. Theodote, fiercely ambitious for her son and consciously ambivalent about his wish, dreams the dreams that would tip the balance in favour of *her* wish – for in the psychoanalytic understanding dreams are never altruistic: being the products of the dreamer's unconscious mind they are the dreamer's egocentric creation and are always to do with his or her own desires or anxieties.

Theodote's short dreams are good examples of condensation, too. In bullet point form, one can unpick at least the following levels of meaning:

- The wishful intervention of the divine glorifies and solves a personal and a family conflict, telling us in the process something about Theodote's narcissistic involvement with her son, whose great future the dreams more than hint at.

[11] *Enc. in mat*., 95.293–96.316, 96.317–97.336.

- The dream solution gratifies Theodote's wish that Michael's education would be an ecclesiastical one, through the words of possibly John Chrysostom, certainly the Virgin.

That the Virgin is the supreme intercessor is significant: Theodote played intercessor between Michael and his father, so this is a case of one intercessor invoking a bigger intercessor, as well as an indication of Theodote's narcissistic identificatory leanings. The dreams are also gratifying at the dreamer's oedipal level: they bring together mother and son as a couple united, in relation to whom the father is the excluded, opposing third; while the mother's intercession provides further evidence of her powerful position, she being both the link and the separating space between the other two members of the oedipal triangle. And so Theodote's dreams, the second a more successful re-run of the first (dreamt it seems on the basis of 'If at first you don't succeed, try again!'), are multiplied, wish-fulfilling and gratifyingly problem-solving dreams. As concerns the bigger dream unit of all five dreams, Theodote's dreams' function is to show both how the mother was pivotal in Michael's development and, more unconsciously, to depict a psychological situation in which the mother's wish at the time was to maintain an indissoluble relationship with her son, who would act with her support in a way which would ensure their continuous tight – perhaps even merged – closeness, through making their respective wishes about his education identical. At that level it is as if Theodote's greatest wish was for her son to never reach the psychological developmental phase which post-Freudian psychoanalysts have termed the 'separation and individuation' phase.

The third dream opens the sequence of Michael's own dreams, and was dreamt when Michael was ten years old.[12] He dreamt that he caught two musical birds and was holding them in his bosom, caressing and playing with them, when they spoke with human voices; they told him that he must prove through argumentation that he is worthy to be their master; Michael talks for a long time and the birds declare that he has won. At the time, Michael tells us, he considered this to be an insignificant dream, a mere phantasy provoked by the senses. Freud would have told him that 'Dreams are never concerned with trivialities; trivialities which do not affect us during the day do not pursue us in sleep'. Michael must have subliminally thought likewise, for he remembered and interpreted the dream 15 years later, when he had indeed mastered rhetoric and had started on science and art. The dream's imagery alludes to literary sources, which Angelidi has unpicked. But, the obvious wish-fulfilment apart, what else is the point of a dream in which Michael is declared winner and master of the spoken word, the use of rhetorical figures and style? Compared to Theodote's two dreams, which precede it, is Michael's dream not the secular-learning

[12] *Enc. in mat.*, 98.

wishful-dream answer to his mother's ecclesiastical-education wishful-dreams' proposal? In the five-dream unit, two things set this dream strikingly apart from the previous and subsequent pair to it: the absence of Michael's mother or indeed of any human being other than Michael; and the absence of any religious reference. The mother has been replaced by Michael's new love, the sublimated love of secular learning he is now holding so close to his heart; birds from literary sources are his judges now, not his mother's Saint and the Virgin; in his mother's dreams he had been a minor, literally and metaphorically, a worshipping subject of the divine as well as the extension and carrier of his mother's wishes; barely two years on, in his own dream Michael is master of his fate: he will not be his mother's boy, he will not do what his parents want him to do and judge – for his own good no doubt – is best for him to do; he is his own person and he will do what he wants to do, what he knows he best loves doing: a conflict familiar to many a young offspring of bossy, interfering parents, in any historical period. This, then, is both a wish-fulfilling dream (Michael triumphant in his chosen life's path) but also a dream marking the phase of Michael's psychological 'separation and individuation' from his parents, especially his mother. The dream signifies a kind of rite-of-passage: it captures Michael at the crossroads between two phases of psychic development, and it does so literally too, placed as it is between the first pair of the mother's wishes for him (or rather, for her) and the last pair.

This last pair is concerned with altogether darker matters – for it speaks of the subsequent repercussions of Michael's defiant individuation.

Michael had the fourth dream while in a state of intense emotional turmoil.[13] His father had just died, deeply troubled, disappointed and angry with the way his son had turned out; Michael's efforts to appease him on his deathbed had failed. As if Michael's feelings of grief, guilt and deep ambivalence were not enough, his mother turned on him that very night with bitter accusations for who he was: a secularist, more or less, who had turned his back on ecclesiastical education and piety – and no doubt a disappointment to his poor father, and of course to her. Filled with anxiety regarding his father's death and the now questionable destiny of his soul, Michael prays to God for a last meeting with his father, and is granted it in a dream. Is there any doubt as to the wish-fulfilling function of this dream? Father and son meet, and they, who had been estranged in life, now finally touch each other; the father tells Michael that he was granted to die – thus exonerating his son of guilt for his death – and, finally taking over mother's role at long last, that he will be interceding to God on Michael's behalf.

This is a dream with a happy ending, in which a rift is repaired, guilt absolved, love restored, anxiety resolved. The sanctificatory tone regarding Michael's father would have made Freud smile, not so much because fathers can remain

[13] *Enc. in mat.*, 129.1254–75.

kings, princes, gods or, in a Christian universe, saints to their sons, but rather because the dream's soupcon of sanctification represents the idealization that so often appears as a reaction formation to the dreamer's true, diametrically opposite feelings – feelings of denigration, imposed guilt, anger, hate even: the negative side of a deep ambivalence giving way to a supposed triumph of its positive side. Underneath it all, the manifest dream's wishful resolution speaks of the very opposite psychic reality: a latent dream content full of the gnawing anxieties and conflicted, unresolved feelings Michael harboured for his father. These are indeed expressed at the end of the dream narrative, when Michael offers both remorse at failing to fulfil his father's wishes *and* a defiant defence of individuation: his declaration that it is free will and personal disposition that should determine our life's path is a now mature and hardened retake of the same stance Michael had taken in the third dream – his childhood's dream, which now comes across as comparatively naive, innocent, sweet.

The fifth and most complex dream was also dreamt at a critical and dramatic moment, following Theodote's death.[14] The dream has two sequences. The opening of the first – two hierophants lead and instruct the dreamer – is conventional enough; what follows is anything but. To this psychoanalyst working cold, the first dream sequence suggests, in quite a detailed way, the process of childbirth – and if so, that would be the dreamers' own. The conventional two persons who are at first with Michael may, at one of a number of dream levels, speak to the fact that two idealized people, a couple, had something to do with Michael's embryonic start inside his mother's belly. Then the dreamer describes: 'At first the road was broad but then became too narrow': which I suggest refers to the fact that at first there is ample space for the embryo in earlier pregnancy but later, closer to birth, space becomes increasingly confined. 'The way was blocked at the end by a thin ochre-coloured wall made of polished stone': a reference, I suggest, to the uterine wall, blocking exit from the womb. 'There was a hole in the middle of it, not exactly circular' – as indeed, the dilating cervix during labour never becomes entirely circular. The hole is 'surrounded by spears': could this be a reference to the pains, dangers and primitive anxieties associated with the waves of contractions? These, we now know from perinatal neurophysiological studies, are experienced by the baby as they truly are, that is, as violent thrusts; while psychoanalysts, starting with Rank and Freud, suggest that the anxiety experienced during birth is the first and greatest prototypical life-threatening anxiety. In the dream it is suggested to Michael 'to go through the hole and [...] that I enter first my head and then slip in my body': the position precisely that a normally delivered, non-breach baby would assume. Michael does this while the stone/uterine wall is opening up – in the dream's words, 'was ceding and somehow dissolving'. Michael Psellos thus goes through the hole and is born to the world.

[14] *Enc. in mat.*, 142.1638–144.1685.

In this understanding, this dream sequence contains what Freud, Jung, Klein and other psychoanalysts variously refer to as universally innate, instinctual unconscious knowledge we all carry within us regarding basic fundamentals about birth – as we also do about sex and death.

The next dream sequence jumps from birth to death. It opens with a possible reference to what Freud might have recognized as delibidinization – the going 'down', rather than up, 'a long staircase'. This may refer to the delibidinization of both parental imagos, as would normally occur at the so-called dissolution of the oedipal complex. Such a possible layer would link up with the sublimation of the third dream, and through condensation could certainly also contain a parallel signification of death and the underworld. That Michael 'bravely came down' the long staircase rather nods that way; though he also had other reasons for needing courage to go down, for he goes that way to find, Orpheus-like, the mother he had just lost. He finds Theodote standing before 'the icon of the Virgin' – which brings to mind, does it not, Theodote's stance towards Michael: that he should have followed an ecclesiastical pathway, not the secular one he chose instead, thus betraying not only his parents' wishes but also the Virgin's, as expressed in Theodote's second dream. It also connects with the latent anxiety of Michael's father-dream, and with the enormous emotional reverberations of the rift between Michael and his father. The father-dream had wishfully resolved this issue, but here we have a *return of the repressed*. Michael 'ran to embrace' his mother, but in contrast to the father-dream, in which the two touch, there is to be no such solace for him here. This is the point at which the dream really becomes a nightmare, in that, contrary to the father-dream and those before it, instead of wish-fulfilment this fifth dream represents the end of illusion. Theodote stops Michael in his tracks and shows him instead 'a monk'. And I wonder whether this monk does not represent Psellos' father. There is perhaps a hint from Michael that this may be the case, when he describes this monk as 'tall and gloomy'. Earlier in the *Oration* Michael had likened his father to a cypress tree, obviously suggesting a tall man; as for 'gloomy', well, he has already told us that his father had died feeling exactly that: gloomy, disappointed, angry with his son. Michael had also let us know of Theodote's bitter anger towards him. He tells us that he saw 'a monk', but his mother 'said that he was St Basil' and, still interceding (or interfering), she 'urged me to pay him my respects'. Is there a quiet dig here at this father, towards whom Michael harboured conflicted feelings? Is he saying in effect that this was just a monk (as indeed his father had been when alive), not the saintly person his mother made him out to be, and Michael himself wishfully and placatingly hinted in the father-dream he might be? But that was in the context of a wishful reconciliation between father and son. Trying for the same here Michael approaches this figure, and it looks for a moment as if his father might relent, for 'he looked up and nodded – but then he disappeared in a rumble of thunder': an outburst of anger, I would say.

Even more painfully, Michael's mother now disappears too and is 'also nowhere to be seen'. Michael has now truly lost them both, not so much because they are dead but because he has lost them intrapsychically, for it really is now too late to meet, touch, embrace, talk, repair. With the finality of the now permanent loss of the possibility of reparation and the recognition that he has forever lost parental love and approval, Michael himself becomes momentarily lost: he finds himself suddenly 'in another place', where 'words I could not grasp' are whispered to him by his companions. Secondary revision seems to have occurred here, as suggested by Michael's attempt to rationalize his incomprehension as due to him being 'asleep'. I think he is saying that he was trying to wake himself up from a nightmare, telling himself that this is a dream, hugely anxious now that his psychic defences have failed him – I mean, Michael Psellos of all people unable to comprehend words! He wants out of this nightmare.

I am struck by Psellos' subsequent lack of words indeed, in the sense of the absence of a direct commentary on this extraordinary dream. Was he trying to just evacuate the nightmare (a function of some anxiety dreams uncovered by post-Freudian analysts) by recording it? Perhaps. But I think rather that Michael subliminally understood the dream: I take his subsequent defiant defence of himself and his actions, in a passage which also stands as an epilogue to the *Oration*, to be the riposte/commentary to the dream.[15] There he defends himself as he knew best, with intelligence, logic, argumentation, evidence: a perfect secularist, in a court in which his prosecutors and accusers are his disapproving parents, internalized in Michael's mind as disapproving super-ego figures. They may be dead, but the pain of their eternal disapproval, of their anger, of the loss of their love, will only die when Michael dies. In this dream, Michael knows that he is and will remain a troubled soul.

The dream represents a failure of dream work: in contrast to the other four dreams – and especially to the preceding father-dream – it fails to give a wishful, happy ending. Instead, Michael's primitive anxieties about his soul and the souls of his parents bursts through with visceral force: it suggests an anxiety paralleled only with the prototypical anxiety surrounding birth, with which the dream began. Is the price to pay for the psychological and moral birth of an individual through individuation and separation from parental wishes the loss of love between them and the death of the soul? If such anxieties are contained in this nightmare, no wonder Michael needed courage to go down that staircase to meet them.

Throughout my reading of the *Oration*'s *oneirographia* I moved within the context of information given us by the dreamer regarding his internal world. But yet again I must remind you that my interpretations remain based on my associations as, sadly for me, possibly not for him, Michael Psellos is not

[15] *Enc. in mat.*, 144.1692–152.1918.

on my couch. But if what I have said is possible, then this psychoanalytic reading of the *Oration's oneirographia* emphasizes the significance of Michael's individualism and takes it further. It charts out its development in Michael's mind, from parental wishes to his defiant individuation against those wishes, and from there on to the subsequent realization of the punishing repercussions of that individuation. The final dream lets us know that Michael's consciously insistent, powerful, rational defence of individuation coexisted with painful and disturbing thoughts regarding the moral and psychological repercussions of his defiant decision; and exposes as illusory the wishful possibility of a comfortable, cosy solution to a profound and diachronic dilemma. For, this fifth dream is a dream with no obvious conclusion or overall function in the general narrative of the *Oration*. It is a dream dreamt and recorded for reasons unknown. It is a dream interrupted; it is wide open to interpretation. As such, Michael's fifth dream and therefore the whole dream unit which ends with an inconclusive non-ending is akin to the modern open novel, inviting the reader to think, imagine, conjecture, interpret, conclude. For all these reasons, it seems to me that the recording of this series of dreams in general, and of the last dream in particular, either makes Michael Psellos a very modern man indeed, or calls upon us to reassess assumptions regarding the boundaries of individuation and self-expression in Byzantine culture.

Index